

exactly consonant to the eternal reason of good and evil. It is good in itself, it is good for us. Some think the evangelical law is here called good, in distinction from the ceremonial law, which consisted of *statutes that were not good*, Ezek. xx. 25. It is *acceptable*, it is pleasing to God; that, and that only, is so, which is prescribed by him. The only way to attain his favour as the end, is to conform to his will as the rule. It is perfect, to which nothing can be added; the revealed will of God is a sufficient rule of faith and practice, containing all things which tend to the perfection of the man of God, to furnish us throughly to every good work, 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.

Secondly, That it concerns Christians to *prove*, what is that will of God which is good, and acceptable, and perfect; i. e. to know it with judgment and approbation; to know it experimentally; to know the excellency of the will of God by the experience of a conformity to it. It is to approve *things that are excellent*, Phil. i. 10. it is δοκιμάζεν, (the same word that is used here) to try things that differ; in doubtful cases readily to apprehend what the will of God is, and to close in with it. It is to be of *quick understanding in the fear of the Lord*, Isa. xi. 3.

Thirdly, That those are best able to prove what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God, who are *transformed by the renewing of their mind*. A living principle of grace is in the soul, as far as it prevails, an unbiassed, unprejudiced judgment concerning the things of God. It disposeth the soul to receive and entertain the revelations of the divine will. The promise is, John vii. 17. *If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine*. A good wit can dispute and distinguish about the *will of God*; whilst an honest, humble heart, that hath spiritual senses exercised, and is delivered into the mould of the word, loves it, and doth it, and hath the relish and favour of it. Thus to be godly, is to surrender ourselves to God.

(2.) When this is done, to serve him in all manner of gospel-obedience. Some hints of this we have here, ver. 11, 12. *Serving the Lord*. Wherefore do we present ourselves to him, but that we may serve him? Act xxvii. 23. *Whose I am*, and then it follows, *whom I serve*. To be religious, is to *serve God*. How?

First, We must make a business of it, and not be slothful in that business. Not *slothful in business*. There is the business of the world, that of our particular calling, in which we must not be slothful, 1 Thess. iv. 11. But this seems to be meant of the business of *serving the Lord*; our *Father's business*, Luke ii. 49.

Those that would approve themselves Christians indeed, must make religion their business, i. e. must chuse it and learn it, and give themselves to it; they must love it, and employ themselves in it, and abide by it, as their great and main business.

And having made it our business, we must not be *slothful* in it; not desire our own ease, and consult that, when it comes in competition with our duty. We must not drive on slowly in religion. Slothful servants will be reckoned with as wicked servants.

Secondly, We must be *fervent in spirit, serving the Lord*. God must be served with the spirit, Rom. i. 9. John iv. 24. under the influences of the holy Spirit. Whatever we do in religion, it is pleasing to God no further than it is done with our spirits, wrought upon by the Spirit of God. And there must be *fervency* in the Spirit; a holy zeal and warmth, and ardency of affection in all we do: As those that love God not only with the heart and soul, but with all our hearts, and with all our souls. This is the holy fire, that kindles the sacrifice, and carries it up to heaven an offering of a sweet smelling favour.

Serving the Lord. τῷ καιρῷ δαλεύοντες; so some copies read it, *serving the time*, i. e. improving your opportunities, and making the best of them; complying with the present seasons of grace.

Thirdly, *Rejoicing in hope*. God is worshipped and honoured by our hope and trust in him, especially when we rejoice in that hope, take a complacency in that confidence; which argues a great assurance of the reality, and a great esteem of the excellency of the good hoped for.

Fourthly, *Patience in tribulation*. Thus also God is served, not only by working for him when he calls us to work, but by sitting still quietly, when he calls us to suffer. *Patience* for God's sake, and with an eye to his will and glory, is true *piety*. Observe, Those that rejoice in hope, are likely to be patient in tribulation. It is a believing prospect of the joy set before us, that bears up the spirit under all outward pressure.

Fifthly, *Continuing instant in prayer*. Prayer is a friend to hope and patience, and we do in it serve the Lord. Προσκυλῶντες. It signifies both fervency and perseverance in prayer. We should not be cold in the duty, nor soon weary of it, Luke xviii. 1. 1 Thess. v. 17. Eph. vi. 18. Col. iv. 2. This is our duty, which immediately respects God.

2. Concerning our duty which respects ourselves; this is sobriety.

(1.) A sober opinion of ourselves, ver. 3. It is ushered in with a solemn preface; *I say through the grace given unto me*: The grace of wisdom, by which he understood the necessity and excellency of this duty; the grace of apostleship, by which he had authority to press and enjoin it: *I say it*, that am commissioned to say it, in God's name: *I say it*, and it is not for you to gain-say it.

It is said to every one of us, one as well as another. Pride is a sin that is bred in the bone with all of us, and we have therefore each of us need to be cautioned and armed against it. *Not to think of himself more highly, than he ought to think*. We must take heed of having too great an opinion of ourselves, or putting too high a valuation upon our own judgments, abilities, persons, performances. We must not be *self-conceited*, nor esteem too much our own wisdom and other attainments; not *think ourselves to be something*, Gal. vi. 3. There is a high thought of ourselves which we may and must have, to think ourselves too good to be the slaves of sin and drudges to this world. But, on the other hand, we should *think soberly*, i. e. we must have a low and modest opinion of ourselves and our own abilities, our gifts and graces, according to what we have received from God, and not otherwise: Not be confident and hot in matters of doubtful disputation; not stretch ourselves beyond our line; not judge and censure those that differ from us; not desire to make a fair shew in the flesh. These, and the like are the fruits of a sober opinion of ourselves.

The words will bear yet another sense agreeable enough: *Of himself*, is not in the original; therefore it may be read, *That no man be wise above what he ought to be wise, but be wise unto sobriety*, i. e. We must not exercise ourselves in *things too high* for us, Psal. cxxxi. 1, 2. not intrude into those things which we have not seen, Col. ii. 18. those secret things which *belong not to us*, Deut. xxix. 29. not covet to be wise above what is written. There is a knowledge that puffeth up, which reacheth after forbidden fruit. We must take heed of that, and labour after that knowledge which tends to sobriety, to the rectifying of the heart, and the reforming of the life.

Some understand it of the *sobriety* which keeps us in our own place and station, from intruding into the gifts and offices of others: See an instance of this sober, modest care in the exercise of the greatest spiritual gifts, 2 Cor. x. 13, 14, 15.

To this head refers also that exhortation, ver. 16. *Be not wise in your own conceits*: It is good to be wise, but it is bad to think ourselves so, for there is more hopes of a fool, than of him that is wise in his own eyes. It is an excellent thing for Moses to have his face shine, and not know it.

Now the reasons why we must have such a sober opinion of ourselves, and our own abilities and attainments, are these.

1. Because whatever we have that is good, *God hath dealt it to us*; every good, and perfect gift *comes from above*, Jam. i. 17. What have we, *that we have not received?* and if we have received it, *why then do we boast?* 1 Cor. iv. 7. The best and most useful man in the world is no more, no better, than what the free grace of God makes him every day. When we are thinking of ourselves, we must remember to think not how we have attained, as though our might and the power of our hand had gotten us these gifts; but think how kind God hath been to us, for it is he that gives us power to do any thing that is good, and in him is all our sufficiency.

2. Because God deals out his gifts in a certain measure: according to *the measure of faith*. Observe, The measure of spiritual gifts he calls the *measure of faith*; for that is the radical grace: What we have and do, that is good, is so far right and acceptable, as it is founded in faith, and flows from faith, and no further. Now, Faith and other spiritual gifts with it are dealt by *measure*, according as infinite wisdom sees meet for us. Christ had the Spirit given him *without measure*, John iii. 34. But the saints have it by *measure*; see Eph. iv. 7. Christ, who had gifts without measure, was meek and lowly; and shall we, that are stunted, be proud and self-conceited?

3. Because God hath dealt our gifts to others, as well as to us: *Dealt to every man*. Had we the monopoly of the Spirit, or a patent to be sole proprietor of spiritual gifts, there might be some pretence for this conceitedness of ourselves; but others have their share as well as we. God is a common father, and Christ a common root to all the saints, that do all derive virtue from him; and therefore it ill becomes us to lift up ourselves, and to despise others, as if we only were the people in favour with heaven, and wisdom should die with us.

This reasoning he illustrates by a comparison taken from the members of the natural body; as 1 Cor. xii. 12. Eph. iv. 16. *As we have many members in one body*, &c. ver. 4, 5. Here observe,

1. All the saints do make up *one body in Christ*, who is the head of the body, and the common centre of their unity. Believers lie not in the world as a confused disorderly heap, but are organized and knit together, as they are united to one common head, and acted and animated by one common Spirit.

2. Particular believers are *members* of this body, constituent parts, which speak them less than the whole, and in relation to the whole, deriving life and spirits from the head. Some members in the body are bigger and more useful than others, and each receives spirits from the head according to its proportion: If the little finger should receive as much nourishment as the leg, how unseemly and prejudicial would it be? We must remember, that we are not the whole; we think above what is meet, if we think so; we are but parts and members.

3. All the members have not the same office, ver. 4. but each hath its respective place and work assigned it, The office of the eye is to

to see, the office of the hand is to work, &c. So in the mystical body, some are qualified for, and called to one sort of work; others are, in like manner, fitted for, and called to another sort of work. Magistrates, ministers, people in a Christian commonwealth, have their several offices, and must not intrude one upon another, or clash in the discharge of their several offices.

4. Each member hath its place and office, for the good and benefit of the whole, and of every other member. We are not only members of Christ, but we are *members one of another*, ver.

5. We stand in relation one to another; we are engaged to do all the good we can one to another, and to act in conjunction for the common benefit. See this illustrated at large, 1 Cor. xii. 14, &c. Therefore we must not be puffed up with a conceit of our own attainments, because whatever we have, as we received it, so we received it not for our selves, but for the good of others.

(2.) A sober use of the gifts that God hath given us. As we must not on the one hand be proud of our talents, so on the other hand we must not bury them. Take heed lest, under a pretence of humility and self-denial, we be slothful in laying out ourselves for the good of others. We must not say, I am nothing therefore I will sit still and do nothing; but I am nothing in myself, and therefore I will lay out myself to the utmost in the strength of the grace of Christ. He instanteth in the ecclesiastical offices appointed in particular churches; in the discharge of which, each must study to do his own duty, for the preserving of order, and the promoting of edification in the church; each knowing his place, and fulfilling it.

Having then gifts. The following induction of particulars, supplies the sense of this general. *Having gifts*, let us use them. Authority and ability for the ministerial work is the gift of God.

Gifts differing. The immediate design is different, though the ultimate tendency of all the same. *According to the grace*, χάρισμα κατὰ τὴν χάριν. The free grace of God is the spring and original of all the gifts that are given to men: It is grace, that appoints the office, qualifies and inclines the person, works both to will and to do. There were in the primitive church extraordinary gifts of tongues, of discerning, of healing; but he speaks here of those that are ordinary. Comp. 1 Cor. xii. 4. 1 Tim. iv. 14. 1 Pet. iv. 10.

Seven particular gifts he instanteth in, ver. 6, 7, 8. which seem to be meant of so many distinct offices, used by the prudential constitution of many of the primitive churches, especially the larger.

There are two general ones here expressed by *prophesying* and *minist'ring*; the former the work of the *bishops*, the latter the work of the *deacons*; which were the only two standing officers, Phil. i. 1. But the particular work belonging to each of these, might be, and, it should seem, was divided and allotted by common consent and agreement, that it be done the more effectually; because that which is every body's work is no body's work; and he dispatcheth his business best that is *vir unius negotii*. Thus David fortified the Levites, 1 Chron. xxiii. 4, 5. and in this, *wisdom is profitable to direct*. The five latter will therefore be reduced to the two first.

1. *Prophecy.* *Whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith.* It is not meant of the extraordinary gifts of foretelling things to come, but the ordinary office of preaching the word: so *prophesying* is taken 1 Cor. xiv. 1, 3, &c. 1 Cor. xi. 4. 1 Thess. v. 20. The work of the Old Testament prophets was not only to foretel future things, but to warn the people concerning sin and duty, and to be their remembrancers concerning that which they knew before. And thus gospel-preachers are prophets, and do indeed, as far as the revelation of the word goes, foretel things to come. Preaching refers to the *eternal* condition of the children of men, points directly at a *future* state.

Now those that preach the word, must do it *according to the proportion of faith*; κατὰ τὴν ἀναλογίαν τῆς πίστεως; that is,

(1.) As to the *manner* of our prophesying, it must be according to proportion of the *grace of faith*. He had spoken, ver. 3. of the *measure of faith* dealt to every man. Let him that preacheth, set all the faith he hath on work, to impress the truths he preacheth upon his own heart in the first place. As people cannot hear well, so ministers cannot preach well, without faith. First *believe*, and then *speak*, Psal. cxvi. 10. 2 Cor. iv. 13. And we must remember the *proportion* of faith; that though all men *have not faith*, yet a great many have besides ourselves: And therefore we must allow others to have a share of knowledge and ability to instruct, as well as we, even those that in lesser things differ from us. *Hast thou faith? Have it to thyself*; and do not make it a ruling rule to others, remembring that thou hast but thy proportion.

(2.) As to the *matter* of our prophesying, it must be according to the proportion of the *doctrine of faith*, as it is revealed in the holy scriptures of the Old and New Testament. By this rule of faith the Bereans tried Paul's preaching, Acts xvii. 11. comp. Acts xxvi. 22. Gal. i. 9. There are some staple truths, as I may call them; some *prima axiomata*, plainly and uniformly taught in the scripture, which are the touchstone of preaching, by which (though we must not despise prophesying, yet) we must *prove all*

things, and then hold fast that which is good, 1 Thess. v. 20, 21. Truths that are more dark, must be examined by those that are more clear; and then entertained when they are found to agree and comport with the analogy of faith; for it is certain, one truth can never contradict another.

See here what ought to be the great care of preachers, to preach *sound doctrine*, according to the form of wholesome words, Tit. ii. 8. 1 Tim. i. 13. It is not so necessary that the prophesying be according to the proportion of art, the rules of logick and rhetorick; but it is necessary that it be according to the proportion of faith: For it is the word of faith that we preach. Now there are two particular works, which he that prophesieth hath to mind; *teaching* and *exhorting*; proper enough to be done by the same person, at the same time; and when he doth the one, let him mind that; when he doth the other, let him do that too as well as he can. If by agreement between the ministers of a congregation, this work be divided, either constantly, or interchangeably, so that one *teacheth*, and the other *exhorts*, i. e. (in our modern dialect) one expoundeth, and the other preacheth; let each do his work according to the proportion of faith.

First, Let him that *teacheth*, wait on *teaching*. Teaching is the bare explaining and proving of gospel truths without practical application, as in the expounding of the scripture. *Pastors and teachers* are the same office, Eph. iv. 11. but the particular work somewhat different. Now he that has a faculty of teaching, and hath undertaken that province, let him stick to it. It is a good gift, let him use it, and give his mind to it. *He that teacheth, let him be in his teaching*; so some supply it. Ὁ διδάσκων, ἐν τῇ διδασκαλίᾳ: Let him be frequent, and constant, and diligent in it; let him abide in that which is his proper work, and be in it as his element. See 1 Tim. iv. 15, 16. where it is explained by two words, ἐν τέτοις ἰδί, and ἐπίμεινε αὐτοῖς, *Be in these things, and continue in them*.

Secondly, Let him that *exhorteth*, wait on *exhortation*: Let him give himself to that. This is the work of the pastor, as the former of the teacher; to apply gospel-truths and rules more closely to the case and condition of the people, and to press upon them that which is more practical. Many, that are very accurate in teaching, yet may be very cold and unskilful in exhorting; and on the contrary: The one requires a clearer head, the other a warmer heart. Now where these gifts are evidently separated, (that the one excels in the one, and the other in the other) it conduceth to edification to divide the work accordingly; and whatsoever the work is we undertake, let us mind it.

To wait on our work, is to bestow the best of our time and thoughts upon it, to lay hold on all opportunities for it; and to study, not only to do it, but to do it well.

2. *Ministry.* If a man hath διακονίαν, the office of a deacon, or assistant to the pastor and teacher, let him use that office well; a churchwarden, (suppose) an elder, or an overseer of the poor; and perhaps there were more put into these offices, and there was more solemnity in them, and a greater stress of care and business lay upon them in the primitive churches, than we are now well aware of. It includes all those offices which concern the τὰ ἔξω of the church, the *out-business of the house of God*. See Nehem. xi. 16. *serving tables*, Acts vi. 2. Now he on whom this care of minist'ring is devolved, let him attend to it with faithfulness and diligence; particularly,

(1.) *He that giveth, let him do it with simplicity*, i. e. Those church-officers, that were the stewards of the church's alms, collected money, and distributed it according as the necessities of the poor were; let them do it ἐν ἀπλότητι, i. e. liberally and faithfully; not converting what they receive to their own use, or distributing it with any sinister design, or with respect of persons; not froward and peevish with the poor, or seeking pretences to put them by; but with all sincerity and integrity, having no other intention in it, but to glorify God, and do good.

Some understand it in general of all almsgiving; he that hath wherewithal, let him give, and give plentifully and liberally; so the word is translated, 2 Cor. viii. 2.—ix. 11. God loves a cheerful, bountiful giver.

(2.) *He that ruleth, with diligence.* It should seem he means those that were assistants to the pastors, in exercising church-discipline, as their eyes, and hands, and mouth, in the government of the church; or those ministers, that in the congregation did chiefly undertake and apply themselves to this ruling work; for we find those ruling, that laboured in the word and doctrine, 1 Tim. v. 17. Now such must do it *with diligence*. It notes both care and industry to discover what is amiss, to reduce those that go astray, to reprove and admonish those that are fallen, to keep the church pure. Those must take a great deal of pains, that will approve themselves faithful in the discharge of this trust, and not let slip any opportunity that may facilitate and advance that work.

(3.) *He that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.* Some think it is meant in general of all, that in any thing shew mercy; let them be willing to it, and take a pleasure in it; God loves a cheerful giver. But it seems to be meant of some particular church-officers, whose work it was to take care of the sick, and strangers; and they were generally widows, that were in that matter servants to the church; deaconesses, 1 Tim. v. 9, 10. though

though others, it is likely, might be employed. Now this must be done with *cheerfulness*. A pleasing countenance in acts of mercy is a great relief and comfort to the miserable; when they see it is not done grudgingly and unwillingly, but with pleasant looks and gentle words, and all possible indications of readiness and alacrity. Those that have to do with them, that are sick, and sore, and commonly cross and peevish, have need to put on, not only patience, but cheerfulness, to make the work the more easy and pleasant to them, and the more acceptable to God.

3. Concerning that part of our duty which respects our brethren: Of which we have many instances, in brief exhortations.

Now, all our duty towards one another is summed up in one word, and that a sweet word, *love*. In that is laid the foundation of all our mutual duty; and therefore he mentions that first, which is the livery of Christ's disciples, and the great law of our religion: *Let love be without dissimulation*: Not in compliment and pretence, but in reality: *Not in word and tongue only*, 1 John iii. 18. The right love is love unfeigned; not as the kisses of an enemy, which are deceitful. We should be glad of an opportunity to *prove the sincerity of our love*, 2 Cor. viii. 8.

More particularly, there is a love owing to our friends, and to our enemies. He instanceth in both.

First, To our friends. He that hath friends, must shew himself friendly. There is a mutual love that Christians owe, and must pay.

(1.) An affectionate love, *ver. 10. Be kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly love.* *φιλᾶδελφοί*; it signifies not only love, but a readiness and inclination to love; the most genuine and free affection, kindness flowing out as from a spring. It properly denotes the love of parents to their children; which, as it is the most tender, so it is the most natural of any other; unforced, unconstrained: such must our love be to one another; and such it will be, where there is a new nature, and the law of love is written in the heart. This kind affection puts us on to express ourselves both in word and action with the most courtesy and obligingness that may be. *One to another*: This may recommend the grace of love to us, that as it is made our duty to love others, so it is as much their duty to love us. And what can be sweeter on this side heaven, than to love and be beloved? He that thus watereth, shall be watered also himself.

(2.) A respectful love: *In honour preferring one another.* Instead of contending for superiority, let us be forward to give to others the preeminence. This is explained, *Phil. ii. 3. Let each esteem other better than themselves.* And there is this good reason for it, because if we know our own hearts, we know more evil by our selves, than we do by any one else in the world. We should be forward to take notice of the gifts and graces, and performances of our brethren, and value them accordingly; be more forward to *praise* another, and more pleased to hear another *praised*, than our selves; *τῷ τιμῇ ἀλλήλους προηγούμενοι*, *going before, or leading one another in honour*; so some read it: Not in taking honour, but in giving honour. Strive which of you shall be most forward to pay respect to those to whom it is due, and to perform all Christian offices of love (which are all included in the word *honour*) to your brethren, as there is occasion. Let all your contention be, which shall be most humble, and useful, and condescending: So the sense is the same with *Tit. iii. 14. Let them learn, περὶ αὐτοῦ, to go before in good works.* For though we must *prefer others*, as our translation reads it, and put on others, as more capable and deserving than ourselves, yet we must not make that an excuse for our lying by, and doing nothing; nor under a pretence of honouring others, and their serviceableness, and performances, indulge ourselves in ease and slothfulness: Therefore he immediately adds, *ver. 11. Not slothful in business.*

(3.) A liberal love, *ver. 13. Distributing to the necessities of saints.* It is but a mock love, which rests in the verbal expressions of kindness and respect, while the wants of our brethren call for real supplies, and it is in the power of our hands to furnish them.

First, It is no strange thing for saints in this world to want necessities for the support of their natural life. In those primitive times, prevailing persecutions must needs reduce many of the suffering saints to great extremities; and still the poor, even the poor saints we have always with us. Surely the things of this world are not the best things; if they were, the saints, who are the favourites of heaven, would not be put off with so little of them.

Secondly, It is the duty of those, who have wherewithal to *distribute*, or (as it might better be read) to *communicate* to those necessities. It is not enough to draw out the fowl, but we must draw out the purse to the hungry. See *Jam. ii. 15, 16. 1 John iii. 17.*

Communicating, κοινωνεῖν. It intimates that our poor brethren have a kind of interest in that which God hath given us; and that our relieving of them should come from a sense and fellow-feeling of their wants, as though we suffered with them. The charitable benevolence of the Philippians to Paul, is called their *communicating with his affliction*, *Phil. iv. 14.*

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We must be ready, as we have ability and opportunity, to relieve any that are in want; but we are in a special manner bound to communicate to *the saints*. There is a common love owing to our fellow-creatures, but a special love owing to our fellow-Christians: *Gal. vi. 10. Especially to them who are of the household of faith.*

Communicating, ταῖς μνήμας, to the memories of the saints: so some of the antients read it, instead of *ταῖς χρεῖαις*. There is a debt owing to the memory of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises; to value it, to vindicate it, to embalm it. Let the memory of the just be blessed; so some read, *Prov. x. 7.*

He mentions another branch of this bountiful love, *given to hospitality*. Those that have houses of their own, should be ready to entertain those who go about doing good, or who for fear of persecution are forced to wander for shelter. They had not then so much of the convenience of common inns as we have; or the wandering Christians durst not frequent them; or had not wherewithal to bear the charges; and therefore it was a special kindness to bid them welcome on free-cost. Nor is it yet an antiquated, superseded duty; as there is occasion, we must welcome strangers, for we know not the heart of a stranger. *I was a stranger, and ye took me in*, is mentioned as one instance of the mercifulness of those that shall obtain mercy: *τὴν φιλοξενίαν διὰκοντες*; following, or *puruing*, hospitality. It intimates, not only that we must take opportunity, but we must seek opportunity, thus to shew mercy: As Abraham, who sat at the tent-door, *Gen. xviii. 1.* and Lot, who sat in the gate of Sodom, *Gen. xix. 1.* expecting travellers, whom they might meet and prevent with a kind invitation, and so they entertained angels unawares, *Heb. xiii. 2.*

(4.) A sympathizing love, *ver. 15. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.* Where there is a mutual love between the members of the mystical body, there will be such a fellow-feeling. See *1 Cor. ii. 26.* True love will interest us in the sorrows and joys of one another, and teach us to make them our own. Observe, The common mixture in this world, some *rejoicing*, and others *weeping*; as the people *Ezra iii. 12, 13.* for the trial, as of other graces, so of brotherly love, and Christian sympathy. Not that we must participate in the sinful mirths or mournings of any, but only in just and reasonable joys and sorrows: Not envying those that prosper, but rejoicing with them; truly glad that others have that success and comfort which we have not; not despising those that are in trouble, but concerned for them, and ready to help them, as being ourselves in the body. This is to do as God doth; who not only hath *pleasure in the prosperity of his servants*, *Psal. xxxv. 27.* but is likewise *afflicted in all their afflictions*, *Ila. lxiii. 9.*

(5.) An united love. *Be of the same mind one towards another*, *ver. 16. i. e. labour, as much as you can, to agree in apprehension; and wherein you come short of that, yet agree in affection; endeavour to be all one, not affecting to clash and contradict, and thwart one another; but keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, Phil. ii. 2.—iii. 15, 16. 1 Cor. i. 10. τὸ αὐτὸ εἰς ἀλλήλους φρονεῖτε*, wishing the same good to others that you do to yourselves; so some understand it. This is to love our brethren as our selves, desiring their welfare as our own.

(6.) A condescending love. *Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate*, *ver. 16.* True love cannot be without lowliness, *Eph. iv. 1, 2. Phil. ii. 3.* When our Lord Jesus washed his disciples feet to teach us brotherly love, *Joh. xiii. 5, 14, 34.* it was designed especially to intimate to us, that to love one another aright, is to be willing to stoop to the meanest offices of kindness for the good of one another. Love is a condescending grace; *Non bene conveniunt—majestas & amor.* Observe how it is pressed here:

1. *Mind not high things*, i. e. We must not be ambitious of honour and preferment, nor look upon worldly pomp and dignity with any inordinate value or desire, but rather with a holy contempt. When David's advancements were high, his spirit was humble, *Psal. cxxxix. 1. I do not exercise myself in great matters.* The Romans living in the imperial city, which reigned over the kings of the earth, *Rev. xviii. ult.* and was at that time in the meridian of its splendor, perhaps were ready to take occasion from thence to think the better of themselves: Even the holy seed were tainted with this leaven. Roman Christians would be ready to look scornfully upon other Christians, as some citizens use to do upon the country; and therefore the apostle so often cautions them against high-mindedness, *comp. chap. xi. 20.* They lived near the court, and conversed daily with the gaiety and grandeur of it; well, saith he, do not mind it, be not in love with it.

2. *Condescend to men of low estate*: *Τοῖς ταπεινοῖς συναπαγόμενοι.*

First, It may be meant of *mean things*, to which we must condescend: If our condition in the world be poor and low, our enjoyments coarse and scanty, our employments despicable and contemptible; yet we must bring our minds to it, and acquiesce in it: So the margin, *Be contented with mean things.* Be reconciled to the place, which God in his providence hath put us in, whatever it be. We must account nothing below us, but sin: Stoop to mean habitations, mean fare, mean clothing, mean accommodations,

dations when they are our lot, and not grudge. Nay, we must be *carried with* a kind of impetus, by the force of the new nature, (so the word *συναπείγματος* properly signifies, and it is very significant) towards mean things, when God appoints us to them; as the old corrupt nature is carried out towards high things. We must *accommodate* ourselves to means things. We should make a low condition and mean circumstances more the center of our desires, than a high condition.

Secondly, It may be meant of *mean persons*: So we read it, (I think both are to be included) *condescend to men of low estate*.

We must associate ourselves with, and accommodate ourselves to, those that are poor and mean in the world, if they be such as fear God. David, though a king upon the throne, was a *companion* for all such, *Psal.* cxix. 63. We need not be ashamed to converse with the lowly, while the great God overlooks heaven and earth to look at such. True love values grace in rags, as well as in scarlet. A jewel is a jewel, though it lie in the dirt. The contrary to this *condescension* is reproved, *Jam.* ii. 1—4. *Condescend*, i. e. suit yourselves to them, stoop to them for their good; as Paul, *1 Cor.* ix. 19, &c. Some think the original word is a metaphor taken from travellers, when those that are stronger and swifter of foot stay for those that are weak and slow, make a halt and take them with them; thus must Christians be tender towards their fellow-travellers.

As a means to promote this, he adds, *Be not wise in your own conceits*; to the same purpose with, *ver.* 2. We shall never find in our hearts to *condescend* to others, while we find there so great a conceit of ourselves: And therefore, that must needs be mortified. *Μὴ γίνεσθε φρόνιμοι παρ' ἑαυτοῖς*. Be not wise by yourselves, i. e. be not confident of the sufficiency of your own wisdom, so as to despise others, or think you have no need of them, *Prov.* iii. 7. nor be shy of communicating what you have to others. We are members one of another, depend upon one another, are obliged to one another; and therefore, *Be not wise by yourselves*; remembering it is the *merchandise* of wisdom that we profess; now merchandise consists in commerce, receiving and returning.

(7.) A love that engageth us, as much as *lies in us*, to live *peaceably with all men*, *ver.* 18. Even those, with whom we cannot live intimately and familiarly, by reason of distance in degree or profession; yet we must with such live *peaceably*, i. e. we must be harmless and inoffensive, not giving others occasion to quarrel with us; and we must be gall-less and unrevenged, not taking occasion to quarrel with them. Thus must we labour to preserve the peace that it be not broken, and to piece it again when it is broken. The wisdom from above is pure and peaceable.

Observe, How the exhortation is limited. It is not expressed, so as to oblige us to impossibilities; *if it be possible, as much as lies in you*. Thus *Heb.* xii. 14. *Follow peace*. *Eph.* iv. 3. *Endeavouring to keep*. Study the things that make for peace.

If it be possible. It is not possible to preserve the peace, when we cannot do it without offending God, and wounding conscience: *Id possumus quod jure possumus*. The wisdom that is from above, is *first pure*, and then *peaceable*, *Jam.* iii. 17. Peace without purity, is the peace of the devil's palace.

As much as lieth in you. There must be two words to the bargain of peace: We can but speak for ourselves: We may be unavoidably striven with; as Jeremiah, who was a *man of contention*, *Jer.* xv. 10. And that we cannot help; our care must be, that nothing be wanting on our parts to preserve the peace, *Psal.* cxx. ult. I am for peace, though when I speak they are for war.

Secondly, To our enemies. Since men become enemies to God, they have been found very apt to be enemies one to another. Let but the center of love be once forsaken, and the lines will either clash and interfere, or be at an uncomfortable distance. And of all men, those that embrace religion have reason to expect to meet with enemies in a world, whose smiles seldom concur with Christ's.

Now, Christianity teacheth us how to carry it towards our enemies; and in this instruction it quite differs from all other rules and methods, which generally aim at victory and dominion; but this at inward peace and satisfaction. And whoever are our enemies, that wish us ill, and seek to do us ill, our rule is, to do them no hurt, but all the good we can.

1. To do them no hurt, *ver.* 17. *Recompense to no man evil for evil*: For that is a brutish recompence, and befitting only those animals, which are not conscious either of any being above them, or of any state before them. Or if mankind were made (as some dream) in a state of war, such recompences as these were agreeable enough; but we have not so learned God, who doth so much for his enemies, *Matt.* v. 45. much less have we so learned Christ, who died for us, when we were enemies, *Rom.* v. 8, 10. *So loved that world, which hated him without a cause*.

To no man; neither to Jew nor Greek; not to one that hath been thy friend, for by recompensing evil for evil thou wilt certainly lose him; not to one that hath been thine enemy, for by not recompensing evil for evil, thou mayest perhaps gain him.

To the same purpose, *ver.* 19. *Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves*: And why must this be ushered in with such an affectionate

compellation, rather than any other of the exhortations of this chapter? Surely, because this is intended for the composing of angry spirits, that are hot in the resentment of a provocation: He addresseth himself to such in this endearing language to mollify and qualify them. Any thing that breathes love, sweetens the blood, lays the storm, and cools the intemperate heart. Would you pacify a brother offended? call him *dearly beloved*: Such a soft word fitly spoken, may be effectual to turn away wrath.

Avenge not yourselves, i. e. when any body hath done you any ill turn, do not desire or endeavour to bring the like mischief or inconvenience upon him. It is not forbidden to the magistrate to right those that are wronged by punishing the wrong doer; or to make and execute just and wholesome laws against malefactors: But it forbids private revenge, which flows from anger and ill will; and this is fitly forbidden, for it is presumed we are incompetent judges in our own case. Nay, if persons wronged in seeking the defence of the law, and magistrates in granting it, act from any particular personal pique or quarrel, and not from a concern that publick peace and order be maintained, and right done; even such proceedings, though seemingly regular, will fall under this prohibited self-revenging: See how strict the law of Christ is in this matter, *Matt.* v. 38, 39, 40. it is forbidden not only to take it into our own hands to avenge ourselves, but to desire and thirst after even that judgment in our case, which the law affords, for the satisfying of a revenged humour.

This is a hard lesson to corrupt nature; and therefore he subjoins,

(1.) A remedy against it: *Rather give place unto wrath*. Not to our own wrath; to give place to that, is to give place to the devil, *Eph.* iv. 26, 27. We must resist and stifle, and smother and suppress that; but, 1. To the wrath of our enemy: Give place to it, i. e. be of a yielding temper; do not answer wrath with wrath, but with love rather: *Yielding pacifies great offences*, *Ecc.* x. 4. Receive affronts and injuries, as a stone is received into a heap of wool, which gives way to it, and so it doth not rebound back, or go any further: So it explains that of our Saviour, *Matt.* v. 39. *Whoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also*. Instead of meditating how to revenge one wrong, prepare to receive another. When mens passions are up, and the stream is strong, let it have its course; left by an unreasonable opposition it be made to rage and swell the more. When others are angry, let us be calm; this is a remedy against revenge, and seems to be the genuine sense. But, 2. Many apply it to the wrath of God: Give place to that, make room for him to take the throne of judgment, and let him alone to deal with thine adversary.

(2.) A reason against it; *For it is written, vengeance is mine*. We find it written, *Deut.* xxxii. 35. God is the sovereign king, the righteous judge, and to him it belongs to administer justice; for being a God of infinite knowledge, by him actions are weighed in unerring balances; and being a God of infinite purity, he hates sin, and cannot endure to look upon iniquity. Some of this power he hath trusted in the hands of the civil magistrates, *Gen.* ix. 6. *Rom.* xiii. 4. their legal punishments therefore are to be looked upon as a branch of God's revengings. This is a good reason, why we should not avenge ourselves; for if vengeance be God's, then

First, We may not do it. We step into the throne of God, if we do, and take his work out of his hand.

Secondly, We need not do it; for God will, if we meekly leave the matter with him; he will avenge us as far as there is reason and justice for it; and further we cannot desire it: See *Psal.* xxxviii. 14, 15. *I heard not, for thou wilt hear*; and what need I hear, and God hear too?

2. We must not only not do hurt to our enemies; but our religion goes higher, and teacheth us to do them all the good we can. It is a command peculiar to Christianity, and which doth highly commend it: *Love your enemies*, *Matt.* v. 44. And we are here taught to shew that love to them, both in word and deed.

First, In word, *ver.* 14. *Bless them which persecute you*. It hath been the common lot of God's people to be persecuted, either with a powerful hand, or with a spiteful tongue: Now we are here taught to *bless* those that so persecute us. *Bless* them, i. e. (1.) Speak well of them: If there be any thing in them that is commendable and praise-worthy, take notice of it, and mention it to their honour. (2.) Speak respectfully to them, according as their place is; not rendering railing for railing, and bitterness for bitterness. And, (3.) We must wish well to them, and desire their good, so far from seeking any revenge. Nay, (4.) We must offer up that desire to God by prayer for them. If it be not in the power of our hand to do any thing else for them; yet we can testify our good-will by praying for them; for which our Master hath given us not only a rule, but an example to back that rule, *Luke* xxiii. 34.

Bless, and curse not. It notes a thorough-paced good-will in all the instances and expressions of it; not bless them when you are at prayer, and curse them at other times; but bless them always, and curse not at all. *Cursing* ill becomes the mouths of those, whose work is it to *bless* God, and whose happiness it is to be *blessed* of him.

Secondly,

Secondly, In deed, *ver. 20.* If thine enemy hunger, i. e. as thou hast ability and opportunity, be ready and forward to shew him any kindness, and to do him any office of love for his good; and nevertheless forward for his having been thine enemy, but rather the more; that thou mayest thereby testify the sincerity of thy forgiving of him. It was said of archbishop Cranmer, that the way for a man to make him his friend, was to do him an ill turn. It is quoted from *Prov. xxv. 21, 22.* So that as high a precept as it seems to be, the Old Testament was not a stranger to it. Observe here,

1. What we must do: We must do good to our enemies. If he hunger, do not insult over him, and say, now God is avenging me of him, and pleading my cause; do not make such a construction of his wants. But *feed him*: Then, when he hath need of thine help, and thou hast an opportunity of starving him, and trampling upon him, then feed him, *ἀσπιζε αὐτόν*, a significant word, feed him abundantly, nay, feed him carefully and indulgently; *frustulatim pascere*, feed him, as we do by children and sick people, with much tenderness: Contrive to do it so, as to express thy love. If he thirst, give him drink: *πότιζε αὐτόν*, drink to him, in token of reconciliation and friendship: So confirm your love to him.

2. Why we must do this; because in so doing, thou shalt *heap coals of fire on his head*. Two senses are given of this, which I think are both to be taken in disjunctively. Thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head; that is, thou shalt either, (1.) Melt him into repentance and friendship, and mollify his spirit towards thee; alluding to those who melt metals; they not only put fire under them, but heap fire upon them; thus Saul was melted, and conquered with the kindness of David, *1 Sam. xxiv. 16.* — *xxvi. 21.* Thou wilt win a friend by it, and if thy kindness have not that effect, then, (2.) It will aggravate his condemnation, and make his malice against thee the more inexcusable: Thou wilt hereby hasten upon him the tokens of God's wrath and vengeance. Not that this must be our intention in shewing him kindness, but for our encouragement such will be the effect.

To this purpose is the exhortation in the last verse, which suggests a paradox not easily understood by the world; that in all matters of strife and contention, those that revenge are the *conquered*; and those that forgive are the *conquerors*.

1. *Be not overcome of evil*, i. e. Let not the evil of any provocation that is given you, have such a power over you, or make such an impression upon you, as to dispossess you of yourselves; to disturb your peace, to destroy your love, to ruffle and discompose your spirits, to transport you to any indecencies, or to bring you to study or endeavour any revenge. He that cannot quietly bear an injury, is perfectly conquered by it.

2. *But overcome evil with good*; with the good of patience and forbearance, nay, and of kindness and beneficence to those that wrong you; learn to defeat their ill design against you, and either to change them, or however to preserve your own peace. He that hath this rule over his spirit, is better than the mighty.

To conclude, there remain two exhortations yet untouched, which are general, and which recommend all the rest as good in themselves, and of good report.

1. As good in themselves, *ver. 9.* *Abhor that which is evil, cleave to that which is good.* God hath shewed us what is good. These Christian duties here enjoined; and that is *evil* which is opposite to them. Now observe,

(1.) We must not only not do evil, but we must *abhor that which is evil*. We must hate sin with an utter and irreconcilable hatred; have an antipathy to it as the worst of evils, and contrary to our new nature, and to our true interest; hating all the appearances of sin, even the garment spotted with the flesh.

(2.) We must not only do that which is good, but we must *cleave to it*. It notes a deliberate choice of, a sincere affection for, and a constant perseverance in, that which is good. So cleave to it, as not to be allured or affrighted from it; cleave *to him that is good*, even to the Lord, *Acts xi. 23.* with a dependence and acquiescence. It is subjoined to the precept of brotherly love, as directive of it; we must love our brethren, but not love them so much, as for their sakes to commit any sin, or omit any duty; not think the better of any sin for the sake of the person that commits it, but forsake all the friends in the world to *cleave to God and duty*.

2. As of good report, *ver. 17.* *Provide things honest in the sight of all men*, i. e. do not only do, but study and forecast, and take care to do that which is amiable and creditable, and recommends religion to all with whom you converse: See *Phil. iv. 8.* These acts of charity and beneficence are in a special manner of good report among men; and therefore are to be industriously provided by all that consult the glory of God, and the credit of their profession.

C H A P. XIII.

There are three good lessons taught us in this chapter, where the apostle enlargeth more upon his precepts, than he had done in the foregoing chapter, finding them more needful to be fully pressed. 1. A lesson of subjection to lawful authority, *ver. 1—6.* 2. A lesson of justice and love to our brethren, *ver. 7—10.* 3. A lesson of sobriety and godliness in ourselves, *ver. 11. ad fin.*

1. **L**ET every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be, are ordained of God. 2. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist, shall receive to themselves damnation. 3. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: 4. For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doth evil. 5. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. 6. For, for this cause pay you tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing.

We are here taught how to carry ourselves towards magistrates, and those that are in authority over us; called here, the *higher powers*; intimating their authority, they are powers; and their dignity, they are higher powers; including not only the king as supreme, but all inferior magistrates under him: and yet it is expressed, not by the *persons* that are in that power, but the place of power itself, in which they are. However the persons themselves may be wicked, and of those *vile persons* which the citizen of Sion *contemneth*, *Psal. xv. 4.* yet the just power which they have, must be submitted to, and obeyed.

He had taught us in the foregoing chapter, not to avenge ourselves, or to recompense evil for evil, lest it should seem as if that did cancel the ordinance of a civil magistracy among Christians, he takes occasion to assert the necessity of it, and of the due inflicting of punishment upon evil-doers; however, it looks like recompensing evil for evil. Observe,

1. The duty enjoined. *Let every soul be subject.* Every soul, i. e. every person, one as well as another, not excluding the clergy, who call themselves *spiritual* persons; however, the church of Rome doth not only exempt such from subjection to the civil powers, but place them in authority above them, making the greatest princes subject to the pope, who thus exalteth himself above all that is called God.

Every soul: Not that our consciences are to be subjected to the wills of any man: It is God's prerogative to make laws immediately to bind conscience, and we must render to God the things that are God's: But it intimates, that our subjection must be free and voluntary, sincere and hearty: *Curse not the king, no not in thy thought*, *Eccles. x. 20.* To *compass* and *imagine*, is treason begun.

This subjection of soul here required, includes inward honour, *1 Pet. ii. 17.* and outward reverence and respect, both in speaking to them, and in speaking of them; obedience to their commands in things lawful and honest, and in other things a patient subjection to the penalty without resistance; a conformity in every thing, to the place and duty of subjects, bringing our minds to the relation and condition, and the inferiority and subordination of it. They are *higher powers*; be content they should be so, and submit to them accordingly.

Now, there was good reason for the pressing of this duty of subjection to civil magistrates. (1.) Because of the reproach, which the Christian religion lay under in the world, as an enemy to the publick peace, order, and government; as a sect that turned the world upside down, and the embracers of it as enemies to Cæsar, and the more because the leaders were Galileans; an old slander; Jerusalem was represented as a *rebellious city, hurtful to kings and provinces*, *Ezra iv. 15, 16.* Our Lord Jesus was so reproached, though he told them his kingdom was not of this world: No marvel then, if his followers have been loaded in all ages with the like calumnies; called factious and seditious, and turbulent, and looked upon as the troublers of the land; their enemies having found such representations needful for the justifying of their barbarous rage against them. The apostle therefore, for the obviating of that reproach, and the clearing of Christianity from it, shews, that obedience to civil magistrates is one of the laws of Christ,

whose

whose religion helps to make people good subjects; and it was very unjust to charge upon Christianity that faction and rebellion, which its principles and rules are so directly contrary to. (2.) Because of the temptation, which the Christians lay under to be otherwise affected to civil magistrates; some of them being originally Jews, and so leavened with a principle that it was unmeet for any of the seed of Abraham to be subject to one of another nation; their king must be of their brethren, *Deut. xvii. 15.* Besides, Paul had taught them, that they were *not under the law*, they were made free by Christ. Lest that liberty should be turned into licentiousness, and misconstrued to countenance faction and rebellion, the apostle enjoins obedience to civil government; which was the more necessary to be pressed now, because the magistrates were heathen and unbelievers; which yet doth not destroy their civil power and authority. Besides, the civil powers were persecuting powers; the body of the law was against them.

2. The reasons to enforce this duty. Why must we be subject?

1. For *wrath's sake*. Because of the danger we run ourselves into by resistance. Magistrates bear the sword, and to oppose them, is to hazard all that is dear to us in this world; for it is to no purpose to contend with him that bears the sword. The Christians were then in those persecuting times obnoxious to the sword of the magistrate for their religion, and they needed not make themselves more obnoxious by their rebellion. The least shew of resistance or sedition in a Christian would soon be aggravated and improved, and would be very prejudicial to the whole society; and therefore they had more need than others to be exact in their subjection, that those who had so much occasion against them in the matter of their God, might have no other occasion.

To this head must that argument be referred, *ver. 2. They that resist shall receive to themselves damnation: κρίμα λήψονται*, they shall be called to an account for it. God will reckon with them for it, because the resistance reflects upon him; the magistrate will reckon with them for it, for they will come under the lash of the law, and will find the higher powers too high to be trampled upon, all civil governments being justly strict and severe against treason and rebellion; so it follows, *ver. 3. Rulers are a terror*. This is a good argument, but it is low for a Christian.

2. We must be subject, not only for *wrath*, but for *conscience sake*: not so much *formidine pœnæ*, as *virtutis amore*. This makes common civil offices acceptable to God, when they are done for *conscience sake*, with an eye God, to his providence putting us into such relations, and to his precept making subjection the duty of those relations. Thus the same thing may be done from a very different principle.

Now to oblige conscience to this subjection, he argues *ver. 1, 2, 3, 4, 6.*

1. From the institution of magistracy. *There is no power but of God*; i. e. God, as ruler and governour of the world, hath appointed the ordinance of magistracy; so that all civil power is derived from him, as from its original, and he hath by his providence put the administration into those hands, whatever they are that have it. By him *kings reign*, *Prov. viii. 15.*

The usurpation of power, and the abuse of power, are not of God, for he is not the author of sin; but the power itself is. As our natural powers, though often abused and made instruments of sin, are from God's creating power, so civil powers are from God's governing power. The most unjust and oppressive princes in the world have no power but what is given them *from above*, *John xix. 11.* The divine providence being in a special manner conversant about those changes and revolutions of governments, which have such an influence upon states and kingdoms, and such a multitude of particular persons and lesser communities.

Or, it may be meant of government in general: it is an instance of God's wisdom, power, and goodness, in the management of mankind, that he hath disposed them into such a state as distinguisheth between governours and governed; and hath not left them like the fishes of the sea, where the greater devour the lesser. He did herein consult the benefit of his creatures.

The powers that be: Whatever the particular form and method of government is; whether by Monarchy, Aristocracy, or Democracy; wherever the governing power is lodged, it is an ordinance of God, and it is to be received and submitted to accordingly; though immediately an ordinance of man, *1 Pet. ii. 13.* yet originally an ordinance of God.

Ordained of God: τετασμένον. A military word, signifying not only the ordination of magistrates, but the subordination of inferior magistrates to the supreme, as in an army; for among magistrates there is a diversity of gifts, and trusts, and services.

Hence it follows, *ver. 2.* that whosoever *resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God*. There are other things from God, that are the greatest calamities: But magistracy is from God, as an *ordinance*; i. e. it is a great law, and it is a great blessing: So that the children of Belial, that will not endure the yoke of government, will be found breaking a law, and despising a blessing. Magistrates are therefore called gods, *Psal. lxxxii. 6.* because they bear the image of God's authority. And those who spurn at their power, reflect upon God himself. This is not at all applicable to the particular rights of kings and kingdoms, and the branches of their constitution; nor can any certain rule be fetched from hence for the modelling of the original contracts betwixt the

governours and governed: But it is intended for direction to private persons in their private capacity, to behave themselves quietly and peaceably in the sphere which God hath set them in, with a due regard to the civil powers, which God in his providence hath set over them, *1 Tim. ii. 1, 2.*

Magistrates are here again and again called God's *ministers*. He is the *minister of God*, *ver. 4, 6.* Magistrates are in a more peculiar manner God's servants; the dignity they have calls for duty. Though they are lords to us, they are servants to God, have work to do for him, and an account to make up to him.

In the administration of publick justice, the determining of quarrels, the protecting of the innocent, the righting of the wronged, the punishing of offenders, and the preserving of national peace and order, that every man may not do what is right in his own eyes; in these things it is that magistrates act as God's ministers. As the killing of an inferior magistrate, while he is actually doing his duty, is accounted treason against the prince; so the resisting of any magistrates in the discharge of these duties of their place, is the resisting of an ordinance of God.

2. From the intention of magistracy. *Rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil, &c.* Magistracy was designed to be,

1. A terror to evil works, and evil workers. They bear the sword; not only the sword of war, but the sword of justice. They are *heirs of restraint* to put offenders to shame; Lash wanted such, *Judg. xviii. 7.* Such is the power of sin and corruption, that many will not be restrained from the greatest enormities, and such as are most pernicious to human society, by any regard to the law of God and nature, or the wrath to come; but only by the fear of temporal punishments, which the wilfulness and perverseness of degenerate mankind hath made necessary. Hence it appears, that laws with penalties for *the lawless and disobedient*, *1 Tim. i. 7.* must be constituted in Christian nations; and are agreeable with, and not contradictory to, the gospel. When men are become such beasts, such ravenous beasts one to another, they must be dealt with accordingly, taken and destroyed, *in terrorem*. The horse and the mule must thus be held in with *bit and bridle*.

Ver. 4. In this work the magistrate is the *minister of God*. He acts as God's agent, to whom vengeance belongs; and therefore must take heed of infusing into his judgments any private personal resentments of his own. *To execute wrath upon him that doth evil*. In this the judicial processes of the most vigilant faithful magistrates, though some faint resemblance and prelude of the judgment of the great duty, yet come far short of the judgment of God: they reach only to the evil act, can execute wrath only on him that *doth evil*; but God's judgment extends to the evil thought, and is a discernor of the intents of the heart.

He beareth not the sword in vain. It is not for nothing, that God hath put such a power into the magistrate's hand; but it is intended for the restraining and suppressing of disorders. And therefore, *if thou do that which is evil*, which falls under the cognizance and censure of the civil magistrate, *be afraid*; for civil powers have quick eyes, and long arms.

It is a good thing, when the punishment of malefactors is managed as an ordinance of God, instituted and appointed by him. (1.) As a holy God, that hates sin; against which, as it appears and puts up head, a publick testimony is thus born. (2.) As king of nations, and the God of peace and order, which are hereby preserved. (3.) As the protector of the good, whose persons, families, estates, and names are by this means hedged about. (4.) As one that desires not the eternal ruin of sinners, but by the punishment of some would terrify others, and so prevent the like wickedness, that others may hear and fear, and do no more presumptuously. Nay, it is intended for a kindness to those that are punished, that by the destruction of the flesh the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

2. A praise to them that do well. Those that keep in the way of their duty, shall have the commendation and protection of the civil powers, to their credit and comfort. Do that which is good, *ver. 3.* and thou needest not be *afraid of the power*; which, though terrible, reacheth none but those that by their own sin make themselves obnoxious to it; the fire burns only that which is combustible; nay, thou shalt have praise of it.

This is the intention of magistracy, and therefore we must, for conscience sake, be subject to it, as a constitution designed for the publick good, to which all private interests must give way. But pity it is, that ever this gracious intention should be perverted, and that those that bear the sword, while they countenance and connive at sin, should be a terror to those that do well. But so it is, when the vilest men are exalted, *Psal. xii. 1.* and yet even then, the blessing and benefit of a common protection and a face of government and order, is such, as that it is our duty in that case rather to submit to persecution for well doing, and to take it patiently, than by any irregular and disorderly practices to attempt a redress. Never did sovereign prince pervert the ends of government as Nero did, and yet to him Paul appealed, and under him had the protection of the law, and the inferior magistrates more than once. Better a bad government than none at all.

3. From our interest in it. He is the *minister of God to the good*. Thou hast the benefit and advantage of the government, and therefore must do what thou canst to preserve it, and nothing

nothing to disturb it. Protection draws allegiance. If we have protection from the government, we owe subjection to it; by upholding the government, we keep up our own hedge. This subjection is likewise consented to by the tribute we pay, *ver. 6. For this cause pay you tribute*; as a testimony of your submission, and an acknowledgment that in conscience you think it to be due. You do, by paying taxes, contribute your share to the support of the power; if therefore you be not subject, you do but pull down with one hand what you support with the other: And is that conscience?

By your paying tribute, you not only own the magistrate's authority, but the blessing of that authority to yourselves; a sense of which you thereby testify, giving him that as a recompence for the great pains he takes in the government; for honour is a burden; and if he do as he ought, *he is attending continually upon this very thing*: For it is enough to take up all a man's thoughts and time; in consideration of which fatigue we pay tribute, and must be subject.

Pay you tribute, φόρους τελεῖτε. He doth not say, you give it as an alms, but you pay it as a just debt, or lend it to be repaid in all the blessings and advantage of publick government, which you reap the benefit of. This is the lesson the apostle teacheth, and it becomes all Christians to learn and practise it, that the godly in the land may be found, whatever others are, the quiet and the peaceable in the land.

7. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour. 8. Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another, hath fulfilled the law. 9. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. 10. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

We are here taught a lesson of justice and charity.

1. Of justice, *ver. 7. Render therefore to all their dues*; especially to magistrates, for this refers to what goes before; and likewise to all with whom we have to do. To be just, is to give to all their due, to give every body his own. What we have, we have it as stewards; others have an interest in it, and must have their dues. Render to God his due in the first place, to ourselves, to our families, our relations, to the commonwealth, to the church, to the poor, to those that we have dealings with, in buying, selling, exchanging, &c. render to all their dues; and that readily and cheerfully, not tarrying till we are by law compelled to it. He instanceth,

(1.) In due taxes. *Tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom.* Most of the countries where the gospel was first preached, were subject at this time to the Roman yoke, and were made provinces of the empire. He wrote this to the Romans, who as they were rich, so they were drained by taxes and impositions, to the just and honest payment of which they are here pressed by the apostle. Some distinguish between *tribute* and *custom*, understanding by the former constant standing taxes, and by the other those which were occasionally required; both which are to be faithfully and conscientiously paid as they become legally due. Our Lord was born, when his mother went to be taxed; and enjoined the payment of tribute to Cæsar. Many, who in other things seem to be just, yet make no conscience of this, but pass it off with a false ill-favoured maxim, that it is no sin to cheat the king; directly contrary to Paul's rule, *Tribute to whom tribute is due.*

(2.) In due respects. *Fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour.* This sums up the duty which we owe not only to magistrates, but to all superiors, parents, masters, all that are over us in the Lord, according to the fifth commandment, *Honour thy father and mother*, compare *Lev. xix. 3. Ye shall fear every man his mother and his father*; not with a fear of amazement, but a loving, reverent, respectful, obediential fear. Where there is not this respect in the heart to our superiors, no other duty will be paid aright.

(3.) In due payment of debts, *ver. 8. Owe no man any thing, i. e. do not continue in any one's debt, while you are able to pay it, farther than by, at least, the tacit consent of the person to whom you are indebted.* Give every one his own. Do not spend that upon yourselves, much less heap it up for yourselves, which you owe to others. *The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again,* *Psal. xxxvii. 21.* Many that are very sensible of the trouble, think little of the sin of being in debt.

2. Of charity. *Owe no man any thing; ἀφείλετε, you do owe no man any thing, so some read it: Whatever you owe to any relation, or to any with whom you have to do, it is eminently summed up and included in this debt of love: But to love one another, that is a debt that must be always in the paying, and yet*

always owing. Love is a debt; the law of God, and the interest of mankind, makes it so: it is not a thing which we are left at liberty about; but it is enjoined us, as the principle and summary of all duty owing one to another; for love is the fulfilling of the law; not perfectly, but it is a good step towards it. It is inclusive of all the duties of the second table, which he instanceth in *ver. 9.* and those suppose the love of God. See *1 John iv. 20.* If the love be sincere, it is accepted as the fulfilling of the law. Surely we serve a good master, that hath summed up all our duty in one word, and that a short word, and a sweet word, *love*, the beauty and harmony of the universe. Loving and being loved, is all the pleasure, joy, and happiness of an intelligent being. *God is love, 1 John iv. 16.* and love is his image upon the soul: where it is, the soul is well moulded, and the heart fitted for every good work. Now, to prove that love is the fulfilling of the law, he gives us,

First, An induction of particular precepts, *ver. 9.* He instanceth in the five last of the ten commandments, which he observes to be all summed up in this royal law, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*; with an *as* of quality, not of equality; with the same sincerity that thou lovest thyself, though not in the same measure and degree. He that loves his neighbour as himself, will be desirous of the welfare of his neighbour's body, goods, and good name, as of his own. On this is built that golden rule of doing as we would be done by. Were there no restraints of human laws in these things, no punishments incurred, (which the malignity of human nature hath made necessary) the law of love would of itself be effectual to prevent all such wrongs and injuries, and to keep peace and good order among us. In the enumeration of these commandments, he puts the seventh before the sixth, and mentions this first, *Thou shalt not commit adultery*; for though that commonly goes under the name of love, (pity it is, so good a word should be so abused) yet it is really as great a violation of it as killing and stealing is: which shews, that true brotherly love is love to the souls of our brethren in the first place. He that tempts others to sin, and defiles their minds and consciences, though he may pretend the most passionate love, *Prov. vii. 15, 18.* doth really hate them, just as the devil doth, who wars against the soul.

Secondly, A general rule concerning the nature of brotherly love: *Love worketh no ill, ver. 10. i. e. he that walks in love, that is acted and governed by a principle of love, he worketh no ill; he neither practiseth, nor contriveth any ill to his neighbour, to any one that he hath any thing to do with: ἐκ ἐργάζεται, the projecting of evil is in effect the performing of it.* Hence devising of iniquity is called the *working of evil* upon the bed, *Mic. ii. 1.* Love intends and designs no ill to any body, is utterly against the doing of that which may turn to the prejudice, offence, or grief of any. *It worketh no ill, i. e. it prohibits the working of any ill: More is implied than is expressed; it not only worketh no ill, but it worketh all the good that may be, deviseth liberal things.* For it is a sin not only to *devise evil* against thy neighbour, but to *with-hold good from them* to whom it is due; both are forbidden together, *Prov. iii. 27.* This proves that love is the fulfilling of the law, answers all the end of it; for what else is that, but to restrain us from evil-doing, and to constrain us to well-doing? Love is a living, active principle of obedience to the whole law. The whole law is written in the heart, if the law of love be there.

11. And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. 12. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. 13. Let us walk honestly as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. 14. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

We are here taught a lesson of sobriety and godliness in ourselves. Our main care must be to look to ourselves. Four things we are here taught, as a Christian's directory for his day's work; when to awake, how to dress ourselves, how to walk, and what provision to make.

1. When to awake. *Now it is high time to awake, ver. 11.* To awake out of the sleep of sin; for a sinful condition is a sleeping condition: out of the sleep of carnal security, sloth and negligence; out of the sleep of spiritual death, and out of the sleep of spiritual deadness, both the wise and foolish virgins slumbered and slept, *Matt. xxv. 5.* We have need to be often excited and stirred up to awake. The word of command to all Christ's disciples, is, *watch.* *Awake, i. e. be concerned about your souls, and your eternal interest; take heed of sin, be ready to, and serious in, that which is good, and live in a constant expectation of the coming of our Lord.* Considering,

(1.) The time we are cast into. *Knowing the time.* Consider what time of day it is with us, and you will see it is high time to awake. It is gospel-time, it is the accepted time, it is working time; it is a time when more is expected than was in the times of that ignorance which God winked at, when people sat in darkness. It is high time to awake; for the sun hath been up a great while, and shines in our faces: Have we this light to sleep in? See 1 *Thess.* v. 5, 6. It is high time to awake; for others are awake and up about us. Know the time to be a busy time; we have a great deal of work to do, and our master is calling us to it again and again. Know the time to be a perilous time; we are in the midst of enemies and snares; it is high time to awake, for the Philistines are upon us; our neighbour's house is on fire, and our own in danger. It is time to awake, for we have slept enough, 1 *Pet.* iv. 3. high time indeed, for *behold the bridegroom cometh.*

(2.) The salvation we are upon the brink of. *Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed;* i. e. than when we first believed, and so took upon us the profession of Christianity. The eternal happiness we chose for our portion, is now nearer us than it was when we became Christians. Let us mind our way, and mend our pace, for we are now nearer our journey's end, than we were when we had our first love. The nearer we are to our centre, the quicker should our motion be. Is there but a step betwixt us and heaven, and shall we be so very slow and dull in our Christian course, and move so heavily? The more the days are shortened, and the more grace is increased, the nearer is our salvation, and the more quick and vigorous we should be in our spiritual motions.

2. How to dress ourselves. That is the next care when we are awake and up. *The night is far spent, the day is at hand;* therefore it is time to dress ourselves. Clearer discoveries will be quickly made of gospel-grace than have been yet made, as light gets ground. The night of Jewish rage and cruelty is just at an end; their persecuting power is near a period; the day of our deliverance from them is at hand, that day of redemption which Christ promised, *Luke* xxi. 28. And the day of our complete salvation, in the heavenly glory, is at hand. Observe then,

First, What we must *put off*. Put off our night-clothes, which it is a shame to appear abroad in. *Cast off the works of darkness.* Sinful works are works of darkness; they come from the darkness of ignorance and mistake, they covet the darkness of privacy and concealment, and they end in the darkness of hell and destruction: Let us therefore who are of the day cast them off; not only cease from the practice of them, but detest and abhor them, and have no more to do with them. Because eternity is just at the door, take heed lest we be found doing that, which will then make against us, 2 *Pet.* iii. 11, 14.

Secondly, What we must *put on*. The Christian's care must be *wherewithal we shall be clothed*, how shall we dress our souls.

(1.) *Put on the armour of light.* Christians are soldiers in the midst of enemies, and their life a warfare, therefore their array must be armour, that they may stand upon their defence; the *armour of God*, which we are directed to, *Eph.* vi. 13, &c. A Christian may reckon himself undressed, if he be unarmed. The graces of the Spirit are this *armour*, to secure the soul from Satan's temptations, and the assaults of this present evil world.

This is called the *armour of light*, some think, alluding to the bright glittering armour which the Roman soldiers used to wear; or such armour as becomes us to wear in the day-light. The graces of the Spirit are suitable, splendid ornaments; are in the sight of God of great price.

(2.) *Put on the Lord Jesus Christ*, *ver.* 14. This stands in opposition to a great many base lusts, mentioned, *ver.* 13. *Rioting and drunkenness*, which must be cast off: one would think it should follow, but put on sobriety, temperance, chastity, the opposite virtues: no, *put on Christ*, that includes all. Put on the righteousness of Christ for justification; be found in him, *Phil.* iii. 9. as a man is found in his clothes; put on the priestly garments of the elder brother, that in them you may obtain the blessing; put on the Spirit and grace of Christ for sanctification; put on the *new man*, *Eph.* iv. 24. get the habit of grace confirmed, the acts of it quickened. Jesus Christ is the best clothing for Christians to adorn themselves with, to arm themselves with; it is decent, distinguishing, dignifying, and defending. Without Christ we are naked, deformed; all other things are filthy rags, fig-leaves, a forry shelter. God has provided us coats of skins; large, strong, warm, and durable. By baptism we have in profession *put on Christ*, *Gal.* iii. 27. Let us do it in truth and sincerity.

The Lord Jesus Christ; put him on as Lord to rule you, as Jesus to save you, and in both, as Christ anointed and appointed by the Father to this ruling, saving work.

3. How to walk. When we are up and dressed, we are not to sit still in an affected closeness and privacy, as monks and hermits. What have we good clothes for, but to appear abroad in them.

Let us walk. Christianity teaches us how to walk, so as to please God, whose eye is upon us: 1 *Thess.* iv. 1. *Walk honestly as in the day.* Compare *Eph.* v. 8. *Walk as children of light.* Our conversation must be as becomes the gospel.

Walk honestly; *εὐταχῶς*, decently, and becomingly, so as to credit your profession, and to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, and recommend religion in its beauty to others. Christians should be in a special manner careful to carry themselves well in those things wherein men have an eye upon them, and to study that which is lovely and of good report. Particularly, here are three pair of sins we are cautioned against.

(1.) We must not walk in *rioting and drunkenness*; abstain from all excess in eating and drinking. We must not give the least countenance to revelling, nor indulge our sensual appetite in any private excesses. Christians must not overcharge their hearts with surfeiting and drunkenness, *Luke* xxi. 34. This is not walking as in the day; for they that are *drunk are drunk in the night*, 1 *Thess.* v. 7.

(2.) *Not in chambering and wantonness*; not in any of those lusts of the flesh, those works of darkness, which are forbidden in the seventh commandment. Downright adultery and fornication is the *chambering* forbidden; lascivious thoughts and affections, lascivious looks, words, books, songs, gestures, dances, dalliances, which lead to, and are degrees of that uncleanness, are the *wantonness* here forbidden; whatsoever transgresseth the pure and sacred law of chastity and modesty.

(3.) *Not in strife and envying.* These are also works of darkness; for though the acts and instances of strife and envy are very common, yet none are willing to own the principles, or to acknowledge themselves envious and contentious. It may be the lot of the best saints to be envied and striven with; but to strive and to envy, ill becomes the disciples and followers of the peaceable and humble Jesus. Where there is *riot and drunkenness*, there uses to be *chambering and wantonness*, and *strife and envy*. Solomon puts them all together, *Prov.* xxiii. 29, &c. Those that tarry long at the wine, *ver.* 30. have contentions and wounds without cause, *ver.* 29. and their eyes *behold strange women*, *ver.* 33.

4. What provision to make, *ver.* 14. *Make not provision for the flesh.* Be not careful about the body. Our great care must be to provide for our souls: but must we take no care about our bodies? Must we not provide for them, when they need it? Yes, but two things are here forbidden,

First, Perplexing ourselves with an inordinate care, intimated in those words *πρόνοιαν μὴ ποιεῖτε*; be not solicitous in forecasting for the body, do not stretch your wits, nor set your thoughts upon the tenter-hooks in making this provision: be not careful and cumbered about it, do not *take thought*, *Matt.* vi. 31. It forbids an anxious incumbering care.

Secondly, Indulging ourselves in an irregular desire. We are not forbidden barely to *provide* for the body, it is a lamp that must be supplied with oil, but we are forbidden to *fulfil the lusts thereof*. The necessities of the body must be considered, but the lusts of it must not be gratified. Natural desires must be answered, but wanton appetites must be checked and denied. To ask meat for our necessities is duty, we are taught to pray for daily bread; but to ask meat for our lusts, is provoking, *Psal.* lxxviii. 18. Those who profess to walk in the spirit, must not fulfil the lusts of the flesh, *Gal.* v. 16.

CHAP. XIV.

The apostle having in the former chapter directed our carriage one towards another in civil things, and prescribed the sacred laws of justice, peaceableness, and order, to be observed by us as members of the commonwealth; comes in this, and part of the following chapter, in like manner to direct our demeanour one towards another in sacred things, which pertain more immediately to conscience and religion, and which we observe as members of the church. Particularly, he gives rules, how to manage our different apprehensions about indifferent things; in the management of which, it seems, there was something amiss among the Roman Christians, to whom he wrote, which he here labours to redress. But the rules are general, and of standing use in the church, for the preservation of that Christian love, which he had so earnestly pressed in the foregoing chapter as the fulfilling of the law. It is certain, nothing is more threatening, nor more often fatal to Christian societies, than the contentions and divisions of their members. By these wounds the life and soul of religion doth expire. Now, in this chapter we are furnished with the sovereign balm of Gilead; the blessed apostle prescribes like a wise physician: Why then is not the hurt of the daughter of my people recovered, but because his directions are not followed? This chapter, rightly understood, made use of, and lived up to, would set things to rights, and heal us all.

1. HIM that is weak in the faith receive you, but not to doubtful disputations. 2. For one believeth that he may eat all things; another who is weak,

weak, eateth herbs. 3. Let not him that eateth, despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not, judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. 4. Who art thou that judgest another mans servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth: Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand. 5. One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. 6. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks. 7. For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. 8. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore or die, we are the Lords. 9. For to this end Christ both died, and rose and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living. 10. But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. 11. For it is written, *As I live*, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. 12. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. 13. Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling-block, or an occasion to fall in *his* brothers way. 14. I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that *there is* nothing unclean of it self: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him *it is* unclean. 15. But if thy brother be grieved with *thy* meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died. 16. Let not then your good be evil spoken of. 17. For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the holy Ghost. 18. For he that in these things serveth Christ, is acceptable to God, and approved of men. 19. Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another. 20. For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed *are* pure; but *it is* evil for that man who eateth with offence. 21. *It is* good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor *any thing* whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak. 22. Hast thou faith? have it to thy self before God. Happy *is* he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. 23. And he that doubteth, is damned if he eat, because *he eateth* not of faith: for whatsoever *is* not of faith, is sin.

We have in this chapter,

1. An account of the unhappy contention which had broke out in the Christian church. Our Master had foretold, that offences would come; and it seems so they did, for want of that wisdom and love, which would have prevented it, and kept up union among them.

(1.) There was a difference among them about the distinction of *meats* and *days*: those are the two things instanced in. There might be other the like occasions of difference, while these made the most noise, and were most taken notice of.

The case was this: The members of the Christian church at Rome were some of them originally Gentiles, and others of them Jews. We find Jews at Rome believing, *Acts* xxviii. 24. Now those that had been Jews, were trained up in the observance of the ceremonial appointments touching *meats* and *days*. This, which had been bred in the bone with them, would hardly be got out of the flesh, even after they turned Christians; especially with some of them, who were not easily weaned from what they had long been wedded to. They were not well instructed touching the cancelling of the ceremonial law by the death of Christ, and therefore retained the ceremonial institutions, and practised accordingly; while other Christians, that understood themselves better, and knew their Christian liberty, made no such difference.

First, Concerning meats, *ver.* 2. *One believeth that he may eat all things*, i. e. he is well satisfied that the ceremonial distinction of meats into clean and unclean, is no longer in force, but that every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused; nothing *unclean of itself*, *ver.* 14. This he was assured of, not only from the general tenour and scope of the gospel, but particularly from the *revelation*, which Peter, the apostle of the circumcision (and

therefore more immediately concerned in it) had to this purpose, *Acts* x. 15, 28. This the strong Christian is clear in, and practiseth accordingly; eating what is set before him, and asking no question for conscience sake, *1 Cor.* x. 27.

On the other hand, *another who is weak*, is dissatisfied in this point, is not clear in his Christian liberty, but rather inclines to think, that the meats forbidden by the law remain still unclean; and therefore, to keep at a distance from them, he will eat no flesh at all, but *eateth herbs*, contenting himself only with the fruits of the earth. See to what degrees of mortification and self-denial a tender conscience will submit. None knows but they that experience it, how great both the restraining and the constraining power of conscience is.

Secondly, Concerning days, *ver.* 5. Those that thought themselves still under some kind of obligation by the ceremonial law, esteemed *one day above another*; kept up a respect to the times of the passover, pentecost, new moons, and feasts of tabernacles; thought those days better than other days, and solemnized them accordingly with particular observances, binding themselves to some religious rest and exercise on those days. Those who knew that all these things were abolished and done away by Christ's coming, esteemed *every day* alike. We must understand it with an exception of the Lord's-day, which all Christians unanimously observed; but they made no account, took no notice of those antiquated festivals of the Jews.

Here the apostle speaks of the distinction of meats and days as a thing indifferent, when it went no further than the opinion and practice of some particular persons, who had been trained up all their days to such observances, and therefore were the more excusable if they hardly parted with them: But in the epistle to the Galatians, where he deals with those that were originally Gentiles, but were influenced by some judaizing teachers, not only to believe such a distinction, and to practise accordingly, but to lay a stress upon it as necessary to salvation, and to make the observation of the Jewish festivals publick and congregational; here the case was altered, and it is charged upon them as the frustrating of the design of the gospel, falling from grace, *Gal.* iv. 9, 10, 11. These here did it out of weakness, the Galatians did it out of wilfulness and wickedness; and therefore the apostle handles them thus differently.

This epistle is supposed to have been written some time before that to the Galatians. The apostle seems willing to let the ceremonial law wither by degrees, and to let it have an honourable burial; now these weak Romans seem to be only following it weeping to its grave, but those Galatians were raking it out of its ashes.

(2.) It was not so much the difference itself that did the mischief, as the mismanagement of the difference, making it a bone of contention.

First, Those that were strong, and knew their Christian liberty, and made use of it, did *despise* the weak who did not: whereas they should have pitied them, and helped them, and afforded them meek and friendly instruction, they trampled upon them as silly, and humourous, and superstitious, for scrupling those things which they knew to be lawful. So apt are those that have knowledge, to be puffed up with it, and to look disdainfully and scornfully upon their brethren.

Secondly, Those that were weak, and durst not use their Christian liberty, did *judge* and censure the strong who did, as if they were loose Christians, carnal professors, that cared not what they did, but walked at all adventures, and stuck at nothing. They judged them as breakers of the law, contemners of God's ordinance, and the like. Such censures as these discovered a great deal of rashness and uncharitableness, and would doubtless tend much to the alienating of affection.

Well, this was the disease, and we see it remaining in the church to this day; the like differences, in like manner mismanaged, are still the disturbers of the church's peace. But,

2. We have proper directions and suggestions laid down for allaying this contention, and preventing the ill consequences of it. The apostle, as a wise physician, prescribes proper remedies for the disease; which are made up of rules and reasons.

Such gentle methods doth he take, with such cords of a man doth he draw them together; not by excommunicating, suspending, and silencing either side, but by persuading them both to a mutual forbearance: and as a faithful day's-man, he lays his hand upon them both; reasoning the case with the strong, that they should not be so scornful; and with the weak, that they should not be so censorious: And if the contending parties will but submit to this fair arbitration, each abate of his rigour, and sacrifice their differences to their graces, all will be well quickly.

Let us observe the rules he gives, some to the strong, and some to the weak, and some to both, for they are interwoven; and reduce the reasons to their proper rules.

1. Those that are weak, must be *received*, but *not to doubtful disputations*, *ver.* 1. Take this for a general rule; spend your zeal in those things, wherein you and all the people of God are agreed, and do not dispute about matters that are doubtful. *Receive him*, *προσλαμβάνετε*, take him to you, bid him welcome, receive him with the greatest affection, and tenderness; *porrigite manum*, so the Syriac: Lend him your hand, to help him, to

fetch

fetch him to you, to encourage him. *Receive him* into your company and converse, and communion, entertain him with readiness and condescension, and treat him with all possible endearments.

Receive him; not to quarrel with him, and to argue about uncertain points that are in controversy, which will but confound him, and fill his head with empty notions; perplex him, and shake his faith: Let not your Christian friendship and fellowship be disturbed with such vain janglings and strifes of words.

Not to judge his doubtful thoughts; so the margin; i. e. not to pump out his weak sentiments concerning those things, which he is in doubt about, that you may censure and condemn him. Receive him, not to expose him, but to instruct and strengthen him: see 1 Cor. i. 10. Phil. iii. 15, 16.

2. Those that are strong, must by no means *despise* the weak; nor those that are weak *judge* the strong, ver. 3. This is levelled directly against the fault of each party. It is seldom that any such contention is, but there is a fault on both sides, and both must mend.

He argues against both these jointly; we must not despise or judge our brethren: Why so?

(1.) Because God *hath received* them; and we reflect upon him, if we reject those whom he hath received. God never cast off any one that had true grace, though he were but weak in it; never broke the bruised reed. Strong believers and weak believers, those that eat, and those that eat not, if they be true believers, are accepted of God.

It will be good for us to put this question to ourselves, when we are tempted to carry it scornfully towards our brethren, to disdain and censure them; hath not God owned them, and if he hath, dare I disown them?

Nay, God doth not only receive him, but *hold him up*, ver. 4. You think he that eateth will fall by his presumption, or that he that eateth not will sink under the weight of his own fears and scruples: but if they have true faith, and an eye to God, the one in the intelligent use of his Christian liberty, and the other in the conscientious forbearance of it; they shall be *held up*; the one in his *integrity*, and the other in his *comfort*. This hope is built upon the power of God, for *God is able to make him stand*; and being able, no doubt he is willing to exert that power for the preservation of those that are his own. In reference to spiritual difficulties dangers, our own, and others, much of our hope and comfort is grounded upon the divine power, 1 Pet. i. 5. Jude ver. 24.

(2.) Because they are servants to their own master, ver. 4. *Who art thou that judgeth another mans servant?* We reckon it a piece of ill manners to meddle with other peoples servants, and to find fault with them, and censure them. Weak and strong Christians are indeed our brethren, but they are not our servants. This rash judging is reprov'd, Jam. iii. 1. under the notion of being *many masters*. We make ourselves our brethrens masters, and do, in effect, usurp the throne of God, when we take upon us thus to judge them; especially to judge their thoughts and intentions, which are out of our view; to judge their persons and state, concerning which it is hard to conclude by those few indications which fall within our cognizance: God sees not as a man sees, and he is their master, and not we. In judging and censuring our brethren, we meddle with that which doth not belong to us: we have work enough to do at home; and if we must needs be judging, let us exercise our faculty upon our own hearts and ways.

To his own master he stands or falls; i. e. his doom will be according to his master's sentence, and not according to ours. How well for us is it, that we are not to stand or fall by the judgment one of another, but by the righteous and unerring judgment of God, which is according to truth? While thy brother's cause is before thy judgment, it is *coram non judice*; the court of heaven is the proper court for trial, where, and where only the sentence is definitive, and concluding; and to which, if his heart be upright, he may comfortably appeal from thy rash censure.

(3.) Because both the one and the other, if they be true believers, and are right for the main, have an eye to God, and do approve themselves to God in what they do, ver. 6.

He that regardeth the day, that makes conscience of observing the Jewish fasts and festivals, not imposing it upon others, nor laying a stress upon it, but willing to be as he thinks, on the surer side, as thinking there is no harm in resting from worldly labours, and worshipping God on those days; it is well. We have reason to think, because in other things he carries himself like a good Christian, that in this also his eye is single, and that *he regardeth it unto the Lord*; and God will accept of his honest intention, though he be under a mistake about the observation of days; for the sincerity and uprightness of the heart was never rejected for the weakness and infirmity of the head: So good a master do we serve.

On the other hand, *he that regardeth not the day*, that doth not make a difference between one day and another; doth not call one day holy, and another profane; one day lucky, and another unlucky; but esteemeth every day alike: he doth not do it out of a spirit of opposition, contradiction, or contempt, of his brother; if he be a good Christian, he doth not, he dares not do it from such a principle; and therefore we charitably conclude,

that to the *Lord be doth not regard it*. He therefore makes no such difference of days, because he knows God hath made none; and therefore intends his honour in endeavouring to dedicate every day to him.

So for the other instance: *He that eateth* whatever is set before him, though it be blood, though it be swines flesh, if it be *food convenient* for him, he *eateth to the Lord*: He understands the liberty that God hath granted him, and uses it to the glory of God, with an eye to his wisdom and goodness, in enlarging our allowance now under the gospel, and taking off the yoke of legal restraints; and he *giveth God thanks*, for the variety of food he hath, and the liberty he hath to eat it, and that in those things his conscience is not fettered.

On the other hand, *he that eateth not* those meats which were forbidden by the ceremonial law, *to the Lord he eateth not*; it is for God's sake, because he is afraid of offending God by eating that which he is sure was once prohibited; and he *giveth God thanks* too that there is enough beside. If he conscientiously deny himself that which he takes to be *forbidden fruit*, yet he blesteth God that of other trees in the garden he may freely eat. Thus while both have an eye to God in what they do, and approve themselves to him in their integrity, why should either of them be judged or despised?

Observe, Whether we eat flesh, or eat herbs, it is a thankful regard to God, the author and giver of all our mercies, that sanctifies and sweetens it.

Bishop Sanderfon, in his XXXIVth sermon upon 1 Tim. iv. 4. justly make this observation: It appears by this, that *saying grace* (as we commonly call it, perhaps from 1 Cor. x. 30.) before and after meat, was the common known practice of the church, among Christians of all sorts, weak and strong: an antient, commendable, apostolical, Christian practice, derived down from Christ's example through all the ages of the church, Matth. xiv. 19.—xv. 36. Luke ix. 16. John vi. 8. Matth. xxvi. 30. Acts xxvii. 35. Blessing the creatures in the name of God before we use them, and blessing the name of God for them after, both included; for *ευχαριστῶν* and *ευχαριστῆν* are used promiscuously.

To clear this argument against rash judging and despising, he shews how essential it is to true Christianity to have a regard to God, and not to ourselves; which therefore, unless the contrary do manifestly appear, we must presume, concerning those that in lesser things differ from us. Observe his description of true Christians, taken from their end and aim, ver. 7, 8. and the ground of it, ver. 9.

1. *Our end and aim*: Not self, but the Lord. As the particular end specifies the action, so the general scope and tendency specifies the state. If we would know what way we walk in, we must enquire what end we walk towards.

(1.) Not to self: We have learned to deny ourselves; that was our first lesson: *None of us liveth to himself*: This is a thing, in which all the people of God are one, however they differ in other things; though some are weak and others are strong, yet both agree in this, not to live to themselves. Not one that hath given up his name to Christ, is allowedly a self-seeker; it is contrary to the foundation of true Christianity.

We neither *live to ourselves*, nor *die to ourselves*, i. e. we are not our own masters, not our own proprietors; we are not at our own dispose: The business of our lives is not to please ourselves, but to please God: The business of our deaths, which we are every day exposed to, and delivered to, is not to make ourselves talked of; we run not such hazards out of vain-glory, while we are dying daily: When we come to die actually, neither is that to ourselves; it is not barely that we would be *unclothed*, and eased of the burden of the flesh; but it is *to the Lord*, that we may depart and be with Christ, may be *present with the Lord*.

(2.) But *to the Lord*, ver. 8. to the Lord Christ, to whom all power and judgment is committed, and in whose name we are taught as Christians to do every thing we do, Col. iii. 17. with an eye to the will of Christ as our rule, to the glory of Christ as our end, Phil. i. 21. Christ is the *gain* we aim at, living and dying. *We live to glorify him* in all the actions and affairs of life; *we die*, whether a natural or a violent death to glorify him, and to go to be glorified with him. Christ is the center, in which all the lines of life and death do meet. This is true Christianity, which makes Christ all in all.

So that whether *we live or die we are the Lord's*, devoted to him, depending on him, designed and designing for him. Though some Christians are weak, and others strong; and they of different sizes, capacities, apprehensions, and practices in lesser things, yet they are all the Lord's; all eying, and serving, and approving themselves to Christ, and are accordingly owned and accepted of him. Is it for us then to judge or despise them, as if we were their masters, and they were to make it their business to please us, and to stand or fall by our dooms?

2. The ground of this, ver. 9. It is grounded upon Christ's absolute sovereignty and dominion, which was the fruit and end of his death and resurrection. To this end *he both died and rose, and revived*. (he being risen, entered upon a heavenly life, the glory which he had before) *that he might be Lord both of dead and living*, i. e. that he might be universal monarch, Lord of all, Acts x. 36. all the animate and inanimate creatures; for he

is head over all things to the church. He is Lord of those that are *living* to rule them, of those that are *dead* to revive them, and raise them up. This was that *name above every name*, which God gave him as the reward of his humiliation, *Phil. ii. 8, 9.* It was after he had died and risen, that he said, *All power is given unto me*, *Matt. xxviii. 18.* and presently he exerts that power in issuing out commissions, *ver. 19, 20.*

Now, if Christ paid so dear for his dominion over souls and consciences, and has such a just and undisputed right to exercise that dominion; we must not so much as seem to invade it, or intrench upon it by judging the consciences of our brethren, and arraigning them at our bar.

When we are ready to reproach and reflect upon the name and memory of those that are *dead* and gone, and to pass a censure upon them, (which some the rather do, because such judgments of the dead are more likely to pass uncontrolled and uncontradicted) we must consider that Christ is *Lord of the dead*, as well of the living. If they are dead, they have already given up their account, and let that suffice.

And this leads to another reason against judging and despising, *viz.*

(4.) Because both the one and the other must shortly give an account, *ver. 10, 11, 12.* A believing regard to the judgment of the great day would silence all these rash judgments. *Why dost thou that art weak, judge thy brother that is strong? and why dost thou that art strong, set at nought thy brother that is weak? why is all this clashing, and contradicting, and censuring among Christians? We shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ*, *2 Cor. v. 10.* Christ will be the judge, and he has both authority and ability to determine mens eternal state according to their works, and before him we shall stand as persons to be tried, and to give up an account; expecting our final doom from him, which will be eternally conclusive.

To illustrate this, *ver. 11.* he quotes a passage out of the Old Testament, which speaks of Christ's universal sovereignty and dominion, and that established with an oath; *As I live*, (saith the Lord) *every knee shall bow to me.* It is quoted from *Isa. xlv. 23.* there it is, *I have sworn by myself*; here it is, *As I live*: So that whenever God saith, *As I live*, it is to be interpreted as swearing by himself; for it is God's prerogative to have life in himself: there is a farther ratification of it there, *The word is gone out of my mouth.*

It is a prophecy in general of Christ's dominion; and here very fitly applied to the judgment of the great day, which will be the highest and most illustrious exercise of that dominion. Here is a proof of Christ's godhead, he is *the Lord*, and he is *God*, equal with the Father. Divine honour is due to him, and must be paid: It is paid to God through him as Mediator. God will judge the world by him, *Acts xvii. 31.*

The *bowing of the knee* to him, and the *confession* made with the tongue, are but outward expressions of inward adoration and praise. *Every knee*, and *every tongue*, either freely, or by force.

(1.) All his friends do it *freely*; are made willing in the day of his power. Grace is the soul's cheerful, entire, and avowed subjection to Jesus Christ. (1.) *Bowing* to him; the understanding bowed to his truths, the will to his laws, the whole man to his authority; and this expressed by the bowing of the knee, the posture of adoration and prayer. It is proclaimed before our Joseph, *Bow the knee*, *Gen. xli. 43.* Though bodily exercise alone profits little; yet, as it is guided by inward fear and reverence, it is accepted. (2.) *Confessing* to him; acknowledging his glory, grace, and greatness; acknowledging our own meanness and vileness, confessing our sins to him; so some understand it.

(2.) All his foes shall be constrained to do it, whether they will or no. When he shall come in the clouds, and every eye shall see him; then, and not till then, will all those promises, which speak of his victories over his enemies, and their subjection to him, have their full and complete accomplishment: then his foes shall be his footstool, and all his enemies shall lick the dust.

Hence he concludes, *ver. 12.* *Every one of us shall give account of himself to God.* We must not give account for others, nor they for us; but every one for himself. We must give account how we have spent our time; how we have improved our opportunities; what we have done, and how we have done it.

And therefore, (1.) We have little to do to judge others, for they are not accountable to us, nor are we accountable for them, *Gal. ii. 6.* *Whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me, God accepteth no man's person.* Whatever they are, and whatever they do, they must give account to their own master, and not to us: if we can in any thing be helpers of their joy, it is well; but we have not dominion over their faith. And, (2.) We have the more to do to judge ourselves, we have an account of our own to make up, and that is enough for us; let every man prove his own work, *Gal. vi. 4.* state his own accounts, search his own heart and life; let that take up his thoughts, and he that is strict in judging himself, and abasing himself, will not be apt to judge and despise his brother. Let all these differences be referred to the arbitration of Christ at the great day.

(5.) Because the stress of Christianity is not to be laid upon these things, nor are they at all essential to religion, either on the one

side or on the other. This is his reason, *ver. 17, 18.* which is reducible to this branch of exhortation.

Why should you spend your zeal, either for or against those things which are so minute and inconsiderable in religion? Some make it a reason, why in case of offence likely to be taken we should refrain the use of our Christian liberty; but it seems directed in general against that heat about those things which he observed on both sides. *The kingdom of God is not meat, &c.* Observe here,

1. The nature of true Christianity, what it is: it is here called, *The kingdom of God*; it is a religion intended to rule us, a kingdom; it stands in a true and hearty subjection to God's power and dominion. The gospel-dispensation is in a special manner called the kingdom of God, in distinction from the legal dispensation, *Matt. iii. 2. — iv. 17.*

(1.) It is *not meat and drink*: it doth not consist either in using or abstaining from such and such meats and drinks: Christianity gives no rule in that case either one way or other. The Jewish religion consisted much in *meats and drinks*, *Heb. ix. 10.* abstaining from some meats religiously, *Lev. xi. 2.* eating other meats religiously; as in several of the sacrifices, part of which were to be eaten before the Lord: but all those appointments are now abolished, and are no more, *Col. ii. 21, 22.* The matter is left at large; every creature of God is good, *1 Tim. iv. 4.* So, as to other things, it is neither circumcision nor uncircumcision, *Gal. v. 6. — vi. 15.* *1 Cor. vii. 19.* it is not being of this party and persuasion, of this or the other opinion in lesser things, that will recommend us to God. It will not be asked at the great day, who eat flesh, and who eat herbs; who kept holy days, and who did not; nor will it be asked, who was conformist, and who was nonconformist; but asked who feared God, and worked righteousness, and who did not. Nothing more destructive to true Christianity, than placing it in modes, and forms, and circumstances, which eat out the essentials.

(2.) It is *righteousness, and peace, and joy in the holy Ghost*: These are some of the essentials of Christianity; things in which all the people of God are agreed; in the pursuit of which we must spend our zeal, and which we must mind with an excelling care. Righteousness, peace, and joy are very comprehensive words; and each of them include much, both of the foundation and the superstructure of religion. Might I limit the sense of them, it should be thus. As to God, our great concern is *righteousness*; to appear before him justified by the merit of Christ's death, sanctified by the Spirit of his grace; for the righteous Lord loveth righteousness: As to our brethren, it is *peace*; to live in peace, and love, and charity with them; following peace with all men; Christ came into the world to be the great peace-maker: As to ourselves, it is *joy in the holy Ghost*; that spiritual joy which is wrought by the blessed Spirit in the hearts of believers, which respects God as their reconciled Father, and heaven as their expected home. Next to our compliance with God, the life of religion consists in our complacency in him; to delight ourselves always in the Lord. Surely we serve a good master, who makes peace and joy so essential to our religion. Then, and then only, we may expect peace and joy in the holy Ghost, when the foundation is laid in righteousness, *Isa. xxxii. 17.*

(3.) It is in these things to *serve Christ*, *ver. 18.* to do all this out of a respect to Christ himself as our master, to his will as our rule, and to his glory as our end. That which puts an acceptableness upon all our good duties, is a regard to Christ in the doing of them. We are to serve his interests and designs in the world; which are in the first place to reconcile us to God, and then to reconcile us one to another. What is *Christianity*, but the serving of *Christ*? And we may well afford to serve him, who for us and for our salvation took upon him the form of a servant.

2. The advantages of it. He that duly observeth these things, First, Is *acceptable* to God. God is well pleased with such a one, though he be not in every thing just of our length. He hath the love and favour of God, his person, his performances are accepted of God, and we need no more to make us happy. If God now accepted thy works, thou mayest eat thy bread with joy. Those are most pleasing to God, that are best pleased with him; and they are those that abound most in peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.

Secondly, He is *approved of men*, i. e. of all wise and good men, and the opinion of others is not to be regarded. The persons and things which are acceptable to God, should be approved of us: Should not we be pleased with that which God is pleased with? What is it to be sanctified, but to be of God's mind? Observe, the approbation of men is not to be slighted; for we must provide things honest in the sight of all men, and study those things that are lovely and of good report: but the acceptance of God is to be desired and aimed at in the first place, because sooner or later God will bring all the world to be of his mind.

3. Another rule here given, is this, that in these doubtful things, every one not only may, but must, walk according to the light that God hath given him. This is laid down, *ver. 5.* *Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind*, i. e. practise according to your own judgment in those things, and leave others to

do so too. Do not censure the practice of others, let them enjoy their own opinion; if they be persuaded in their own mind that they ought to do so and so, do not condemn them; but if your sober sentiments be otherwise, do not make their practice a rule to you, any more than you must prescribe your's as a rule to them. Take heed of acting contrary to the dictates of a doubting conscience: First be persuaded, that what you do is lawful, before you venture to do it. In doubtful things, it is good keeping on the sure side of the hedge. If a weak Christian doubt whether it be lawful to eat flesh, while he remains under that doubt he had best forbear, till he be fully persuaded in his own mind. We must not pin our faith upon any one's sleeve, or make others practice our rule; but follow the dictates of our own understanding.

To this purpose he argues, *ver. 14.* and *ver. 23.* Which two verses explain this, and give us a rule not to act against the dictates,

1. Of a mistaken conscience, *ver. 14.* If a thing be indifferent, so that it is not in itself a sin not to do it, if we really think it a sin to do it, it is to us a sin, though not to others, because we act against our consciences, though mistaken and misinformed.

He instanceth in the case in hand, concerning the difference of meats. Observe,

(1.) His own clearness in this matter: *I know and am persuaded*, i. e. I am fully persuaded, I am acquainted with my Christian liberty, and am satisfied in it, without any doubt or scruple, that there is *nothing unclean of itself*, i. e. no kind of meat that lies under any ceremonial uncleanness, nor is forbidden to be eaten, if it be food proper for human bodies. Several kinds of meat were forbidden to the Jews, that in that, as in other things, they might be a peculiar and separate people, *Lev. xi. 44.* *Deut. xiv. 2, 3.* Sin had brought a curse upon the whole creation, cursed is the ground for thy sake; the use of the creatures, and dominion over them was forfeited, so that to man they were all unclean, *Tit. i. 15.* In token of which, God in the ceremonial law prohibited the use of some, to shew what he might have done concerning all; but now Christ has removed the curse, the matter is set at large again, and that prohibition is taken away.

Therefore he saith, he was persuaded by the Lord Jesus, not only as the author of that persuasion, but as the ground of it, it was built upon the efficacy of Christ's death, which removed the curse, took off the forfeiture, and restored our right to the creature in general, and consequently put a period to that particular distinguishing prohibition. So that now there is nothing unclean of itself, every creature of God is good; nothing common; so the margin, *ἡ δὲν κοινὸν*; nothing which is common to others to eat, from the use of which the professors of religion are restrained: Nothing profane; in this sense the Jews used the word *common*. It is explained by the word *ἀνάσπαλον*, *Acts x. 14.* nothing common or unclean.

It was not only from the revelation made to Peter in this matter, but from the tenour and tendency of the whole gospel, and the manifest design of Christ's death in general, that Paul learned to count nothing common or unclean. This was Paul's own clearness, and he practised accordingly.

(2.) But here is a caution he gives to those who had not that clearness in this matter which he had. *To him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean*, though it be his error, yet *to him it is unclean*. This particular case thus determined, gives a general rule, That he that doth a thing which he verily believeth to be unlawful, however the thing be in itself, to him it is a sin. This ariseth from that unchangeable law of our creation, which is, that our wills, in all their choices, motions, and directions, should follow the dictates of our understandings. This is the order of nature; which order is broken, if the understanding (though misguided) tell us that such a thing is a sin, and yet we will do it. This is a will to do evil; for if it appears to us to be sin, there is the same pravity and corruption of the will in the doing of it, as if really it were a sin; and therefore we ought not to do it. Not that it is in the power of any man's conscience to alter the nature of the action in itself, but only as to himself. It must be understood likewise with this proviso, though mens judgments and opinions may make that which is good in itself to become evil to them, yet they cannot make that which is evil in itself to become good, either in itself or to them. If a man were verily persuaded, (it is Dr. Sanderfon's instance, sermon on *Rom. xiv. 23.*) that it were evil to ask his father blessing, that mispersuasion would make it become evil to him: but if he should be as verily persuaded, that it were good to curse his father, that would not make it become good. The Pharisees taught people to plead conscience, when they made corban an excuse for denying relief to their parents, *Matt. xv. 5, 6.* But that would not serve, any more than Paul's erroneous conscience would justify his rage against Christianity, *Acts xxvi. 9.* or theirs, *John xvi. 2.*

2. Nor must we act against the dictates of a doubting conscience. In those indifferent things, which we are sure it is no sin not to do, and yet are not clear that it is lawful to do them, we must not do them while we continue under those doubts; for he that doubteth, is damned if he eat, *ver. 23. i. e.* it turns into sin to him;

he is damned, *κατακρίνεται*, he is condemned of his own conscience, because he eateth not of faith, i. e. because he doth that which he is not fully persuaded he may lawfully do. He is not clear, that it is lawful for him to eat swines flesh, (suppose) and yet is drawn notwithstanding his doubts, to eat it, because he sees others do it, because he would gratify his appetite with it, or because he would not be reproached for his singularity. Here his own heart cannot but condemn him as a transgressor. Our rule is to walk as far as we have attained, not farther, *Phil. iii. 15, 16.* For whatsoever is not of faith, is sin. Taking it in general, it is the same with that of the apostle, *Heb. xi. 6.* Without faith it is impossible to please God: Whatever we do in religion, it will not turn to any good account, except we do it from a principle of faith, with a believing regard to the will of Christ as our rule, to the glory of Christ as our end, and to the righteousness of Christ as our plea. Here it seems to be taken more strictly; whatever is not of faith, i. e. whatever is done while we are not clearly persuaded of the lawfulness of it, is a sin against conscience. He that will venture to do that which his own conscience suggests to him to be unlawful when it is not so in itself, will by a like temptation be brought to do that which his conscience tells him is unlawful, when it is really so. The spirit of a man is the candle of the Lord, and it is a dangerous thing to debase and put a force upon conscience, though it be under a mistake.

This seems to be the meaning of that aphorism, which sounds somewhat darkly, *ver. 22.* Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. Many a one alloweth himself in practice to do that, which yet in his judgment and conscience he condemneth himself for; allows it for the sake of the pleasure, profit, or credit of it; allows it in conformity to the custom; and yet whilst he doth it, and pleads for it, his own heart gives him the lye, and his conscience condemns him for it. Now, happy is the man who so orders his conversation, as not in any action to expose himself to the challenges and reproaches of his own conscience; that doth not make his own heart his adversary, as he must needs do, who doth that which he is not clear he may lawfully do. He is happy, that hath peace and quietness within; for the testimony of conscience will be a special cordial in troublesome times; though men condemn us, it is well enough if our own hearts condemn us not, *1 John iii. 21.*

4. Another rule here prescribed, is, to those who are clear in these matters, and do know their Christian liberty, yet to take heed of using it so as to give offence to a weak brother. This is laid down, *ver. 13.* Let us not judge one another any more: Let it suffice, that you have hitherto continued in this uncharitable practice, and do so no more. The better to insinuate the exhortation, he puts himself in; let us not, *q. d.* it is what I have resolved against, therefore do you leave it: but judge this rather; instead of censuring the practice of others, let us look to the conduct of our own, that no man put a stumbling-block, or an occasion to fall, in his brother's way, *πρόσκομμα ἢ σκάνδαλον*. We must take heed of saying or doing any thing, which may occasion our brother to stumble or fall; the one signifies a lesser, the other a greater degree of mischief and offence, that which may be an occasion,

(1.) Of grief to our brother. One that is weak, and thinks it unlawful to eat such and such meats, will be greatly troubled to see thee eat them, out of a concern for the honour of the law which he thinks forbids them, and for the good of thy soul which he thinks is wronged by them; especially when thou doest it wilfully, and with a seeming presumption, and not with that tenderness and that care to give satisfaction to thy weak brother, which would become thee. Christians should take heed of grieving one another, and of saddening the hearts of Christ's little ones. See *Matt. xviii. 6, 10.*

(2.) Of guilt to our brother. The former is a *stumbling-block*, that gives our brother a great shake, and is a hindrance and discouragement to him; but this is an *occasion to fall*. If thy weak brother, purely by thine example and influence, without any satisfaction received concerning his Christian liberty, be drawn to act against his conscience, and to walk contrary to the light he has, and so to contract guilt upon his soul; though the thing were lawful to thee, yet not being so to him, (having not yet thereto attained) thou wast to be blamed for giving them the occasion. See this case explained, *1 Cor. viii. 9, 10, 11.*

To the same purpose, *ver. 21.* he recommends it to our care, not to give offence to any one by the use of lawful things. It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine; these are things lawful indeed, and comfortable, but not necessary to the support of human life; and therefore we may, and must deny ourselves in them, rather than give offence.

It is good, pleasing to God, profitable to our brother, and no harm to ourselves. Daniel and his fellows, were in better liking with pulse and water, than they were that eat the portion of the king's meat. It is a generous piece of self-denial, for which we have Paul's example, *1 Cor. viii. 13.* If meat make thy brother to offend; he doth not say, I will eat no meat, that is to destroy himself; but, *I will eat no flesh*, that is to deny himself, while the world stands. This is to be extended to all such indifferent things, whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, is involved either in

sin or trouble: or, *is made weak*; his graces weakened, his comforts weakened, his resolutions weakened. *Is made weak*, i. e. takes occasion to shew his weakness, by his censures and scruples. We must not weaken those that are weak; that is to quench the smoking flax, and to break the bruised reed.

Observe the motives to enforce this caution.

1. Consider the royal law of Christian love and charity, which is hereby broken. Ver. 15. *If thy brother be grieved with thy meat*, i. e. be troubled to see thee eat those things, which the law of Moses did forbid, which yet thou mayst lawfully do; possibly thou art ready to say, Now he talks foolishly and weakly, and it is no great matter what he saith: We are apt, in such a case, to lay all the blame on that side. But the reproof here is given to the stronger and more knowing Christian, *Now walkest thou not charitably*. Thus the apostle takes part with the weakest, and condemns the defect in love on the one side, more than the defect in knowledge on the other side; agreeable to his principles elsewhere, that the way of love is the *more excellent way*, 1 Cor. xii. ult. Knowledge puffeth up, but *charity edifieth*, 1 Cor. viii. 1, 2, 3. Now walkest thou not charitably. Charity to the souls of our brethren is the best charity. True love would make us tender of their peace and purity, and beget a regard to their consciences, as well as to our own. Christ deals gently with those that have true grace, though they are weak in it.

2. Consider the design of Christ's death. *Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died*, ver. 5. 1. Drawing of a soul to sin, threatens the destruction of that soul. By shaking his faith, provoking his passion, and tempting him to act against the light of his own conscience, thou dost, as much as in thee lies, destroy him, giving him an occasion to return to Judaism again. *Μὴ ἀπώλλυε*. It notes an utter destruction: The beginning of sin is as the letting forth of water; we are not sure that it will stop any where on this side eternal destruction. 2. The consideration of the love of Christ in dying for souls, should make us very tender of the happiness and salvation of souls, and careful not to do any thing which may obstruct and hinder it. Did Christ quit a life for souls, such a life, and shall not we quit a morsel of meat for them? Shall we despise those whom Christ valued at so high a rate? Did he think it worth while to deny himself so much for them, as to die for them, and shall not we think it worth while to deny ourselves so little for them, as abstaining from flesh comes to?

With thy meat. Thou pleadest that it is thy own meat, and thou mayest do what thou wilt with it; but remember, that though the meat is thine, the brother offended by it is Christ's, and a part of his purchase. While thou destroyest thy brother, thou art helping forward the devil's design, for he is the great destroyer; and, as much as in thee lies, thou art crossing the design of Christ, for he is the great Saviour; and dost not only offend thy brother, but offend Christ; for the work of salvation is that which his heart is upon.

But are any destroyed for whom Christ died? If we understand it of the sufficiency and general intendment of Christ's death, which was to save all upon gospel-terms, no doubt but multitudes are. If of the particular determination of the efficacy of his death to the elect then, though none that were given to Christ shall perish, *John* vi. 39. yet thou mayest, as much as is in thy power, destroy such: No thanks to thee if they be not; by doing that which hath a tendency to it, thou dost manifest a great opposition to Christ. Nay, and thou mayest utterly destroy some, whose profession may be so justifiable, that thou art bound to believe in a judgment of charity, that Christ died for them. Compare this with 1 Cor. viii. 10, 11.

3. Consider the work of God, ver. 20. *For meat destroy not the work of God*, i. e. the work of grace, particularly the work of faith in thy brother's soul. The work of peace and comfort are destroyed by such an offence given; take heed of it therefore: Do not undo that which God hath done, you should work together with God, do not countermine his work.

(1.) The work of grace and peace is the *work of God*; it is wrought by him, it is wrought for him; it is a good work of his beginning, *Phil.* i. 6. Observe, The same *for whom Christ died*, ver. 5. are here called the *work of God*; besides the work that is wrought for us, there is a work to be wrought in us, in order to our salvation. Every saint is God's *workman/ship*, his husbandry, his building, *Eph.* ii. 10. 1 Cor. iii. 9.

(2.) We must be very careful to do nothing which tends to the destruction of this work, either in ourselves or others. We must deny ourselves in our appetites, inclinations, and in the use of Christian liberty, rather than obstruct and prejudice our own or others grace and peace. Many do for meat and drink destroy the work of God in themselves; nothing more destructive to the soul than pampering and pleasing the flesh, and fulfilling the lusts of it; so likewise in others, by wilful offence given. Think what thou destroyest, *the work of God*, whose work is honourable and glorious; think for what thou destroyest it, *for meat*, which was but for the belly, and the belly for it.

4. Consider the evil of giving offence, and what an abuse it is of our Christian liberty. He grants, that *all things indeed are pure*; we may lawfully eat flesh, even those meats which were prohibited by the ceremonial law; but if we abuse this liberty, it

turns into sin to us; *it is evil to him that eats with offence*. Lawful things may be done unlawfully. *Eats with offence*, either carelessly, or designedly, giving offence to his brethren.

It is observable, that the apostle directs his reproof most against those who gave the offence; not as if they were not to be blamed who causelessly and weakly took the offence from the ignorance of Christian liberty, and the want of that charity which is not easily provoked, and which thinketh no evil; he doth several times tacitly reflect upon them: But he directs his speech to the strong, because they were better able to bear the reproof, and to begin the reformation.

For the further pressing of this rule, we may here observe two directions which have relation to it.

First, *Let not then your good be evil spoken of*, ver. 16. i. e. take heed of doing any thing which may give occasion to others to speak evil, either of the Christian religion in general, or of your Christian liberty in particular. The gospel is *your good*; the liberties and franchises, the privileges and immunities granted by it are *your good*; your knowledge and strength of grace to discern and use your liberty in things disputed, is *your good*; a good which the weak brother hath not. Now let not this be *evil spoken of*: It is true, we cannot hinder loose and ungoverned tongues from speaking evil of us, and of the best things we have; but we must not (if we can help it) give them any occasion to do it. Let not the reproach arise from any default of ours; as 1 Tim. iv. 12. *Let no man despise thee*, i. e. do not make thyself despicable: So here, do not use your knowledge and strength in such a manner as to give occasion to people to call it presumption, and loose walking, and disobedience to God's law. We must deny ourselves in many cases for the preservation of our credit and reputation; forbearing to do that which we rightly know we may lawfully do, when our doing of it may be a prejudice to our good name: As, when it is suspicious, and hath the appearance of evil; or when it is become scandalous among good people, or hath any way a brand upon it. In such a case we must rather cross ourselves, than shame ourselves. Though it be but a *little folly*, it may be like a dead fly, very prejudicial to one that is in reputation for wisdom and honour, *Ecc.* x. 1.

We may apply it more generally: We should manage all our good duties in such a manner as that they may not be evil spoken of. That which for the matter of it is good and unexceptionable, may sometimes, by a mismanagement, be rendered liable to a great deal of censure and reproach. Good praying, preaching, and discourse, many times for want of prudence in ordering the time, the expression, and other circumstances to edification, may be evil spoken of. It is indeed their sin, that do speak evil of that which is good, for the sake of any such circumstantial errors; but it is our folly, if we give any occasion to do so. As we tender the reputation of the good we profess and practise, let us so order it as that it may not be evil spoken of.

Secondly, *Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God*, ver. 22. It is not meant of justifying faith; that must not be hid, but manifested by our works: but of a knowledge and persuasion of our Christian liberty in things disputed. Hast thou clearness in such a particular? Art thou satisfied that thou mayest eat all meats, and observe all days (except the Lord's day) alike? *Have it to thyself*, i. e. enjoy the comfort of it in thy own bosom, and do not trouble others by the imprudent use of it, when it might give offence, and cause thy weak brother to stumble and fall. In these indifferent things, though we must never contradict our persuasion, yet we may sometime conceal it, when the avowing of it will do more hurt than good. *Have it to thyself*; a rule to thyself, not to be imposed upon others, or made a rule to them; or a rejoicing to thyself. Clearness in doubtful matters contributes very much to our comfortable walking, as it frees us from those scruples, jealousies, and suspicions, which those, who have not such clearness, are entangled in endlessly. Compare *Gal.* vi. 4. *Let every man prove his own work*, i. e. bring it to the touchstone of the word, and try it by that so exactly, as to be well satisfied in what he doth; and then he *shall have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another*. Paul had faith in these things; I am persuaded, that there is nothing unclean of itself; but he had it to himself, so as not to use his liberty to the offence of others.

How happy were it for the church, if those that have a clearness in disputable things, would be satisfied to have it to themselves before God, and not impose those things upon others, and make them terms of communion; than which nothing is more opposite to Christian liberty, nor more destructive both to the peace of churches, and the peace of consciences? That healing method is nevertheless excellent for being common; in things necessary, let there be unity, in things unnecessary let there be liberty, and in both let there be charity, then all will be well quickly.

Have it to thyself before God: The end of such knowledge is, that being satisfied in our liberty, we may have a conscience void of offence towards God, and let that content us. That is the true comfort which we have before God: Those are right indeed, that are so in God's sight.

5. There is one rule more laid down here; and it is general, *Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another*, ver. 19. Here is the sum of our duty towards our brethren.

1. We must study mutual peace: Many wish for peace, and talk loud for it, that do not follow the things that make for peace, but the contrary. Liberty in things indifferent, condescension to those that are weak and tender, zeal in the great things of God wherein we are all agreed; these are things that *make for peace*. Meekness, humility, self-denial, and love, are the springs of peace; the things that make for our peace. We are not always so happy as to obtain peace; there are so many that delight in war: But the God of peace will accept us, if we follow after the things that make for peace, *i. e.* if we do our endeavour.

2. We must study mutual *edification*. The former makes way for this. We cannot edify one another, while we are quarrelling and contending. There are many ways by which we may edify one another, if we did but seriously mind it; by good counsel, reproof, instruction, example, building up not only ourselves, but one another in the most holy faith. We are God's building, God's temple, and have need to be edified; and therefore must study to promote the spiritual growth one of another. None so strong but they may be edified; none so weak, but may edify; and while we edify others, we benefit ourselves.

C H A P. XV.

The apostle in this chapter continues the discourse of the former, concerning mutual forbearance in indifferent things; and so draws towards a conclusion of the epistle. Where such differences of apprehension, and consequently distances of affection, are among Christians, there is need of precept upon precept, line upon line, to allay the heat, and to beget a better temper. The apostle being desirous to drive the nail home, as a nail in a sure place, follows his blow, unwilling to leave the subject till he had some hopes of prevailing: To which end he orders the cause before them, and fills his mouth with the most pressing arguments.

We may observe in this chapter, (1.) His precepts to them. (2.) His prayers for them. (3.) His apology for writing to them. (4.) His account of himself and his own affairs. (5.) His declaration of his purpose to come to see them. (6.) His desire of a share in their prayers.

1. **W**E then that are strong, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. 2. Let every one of us please *his* neighbour for *his* good to edification. 3. For even Christ pleased not himself; but as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee, fell on me. 4. For whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning; that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.

The apostle here lays down two precepts, with reasons to enforce them, shewing the duty of the strong Christian to consider and condescend to the weakest.

1. We must *bear the infirmities of the weak*, ver. 1. We all have our infirmities; but the weak are more subject to them than others; the weak in knowledge, or grace; the bruised reed, and the smoking flax. We must consider these; not trample upon them, but encourage them, and *bear with their infirmities*: If through weakness they judge and censure us, and speak evil of us, we must bear with them, pity them, and not have our affections alienated from them. Alas! it is their weakness, they cannot help it. Thus Christ bore with his weak disciples, and excused for them. But there is more in it; we must also *bear their infirmities*, by sympathizing with them, concerning ourselves for them, ministering strength to them, as there is occasion. That is bearing one another's burdens.

2. We must *not please ourselves*, but *our neighbour*, ver. 1, 2. We must deny our own humour in consideration of our brethren's weakness and infirmity. (1.) Christians must not please themselves. We must not make it our business to gratify all the little appetites and desires of our own heart, it is good for us to cross ourselves sometimes; and then we shall the better bear others crossing of us. We shall be spoiled, (as Adonijah was) if we be always humoured. The first lesson we have to learn, is to deny ourselves, *Matth. xvi. 24.* (2.) Christians must *please their brethren*. The design of Christianity is to soften and meek the Spirit, to teach us the art of obliging, and true complaisance; not to be servants to the lusts of any, but to the necessities and infirmities of our brethren; to comply with all that we have to do with, as far as we can with a good conscience. Christians should study to be pleasing.

Not *please ourselves* in the use of our Christian liberty, which was allowed us not for own pleasure, but for the glory of God, and the profit and edification of others. So we must please our neighbour. How amiable and comfortable a society would the

church of Christ be, if Christians would study to please one another, as now we see them commonly industrious to cross and thwart, and contradict one another!

Please his neighbour, not in every thing, it is not an unlimited rule; but *for his good*, especially for the good of his soul: Not please him by serving his wicked wills, and humouring him in a sinful way; or consenting to his enticements, or suffering sin upon him; this is a base way of pleasing our neighbour to the ruin of his soul: If we thus please men, we are not the servants of Christ: But please him for his good; not for our own secular good, or to make a prey of him, but for his spiritual good.

To edification, *i. e.* not only for his profit, but for the profit of others, to edify the body of Christ by studying to oblige one another. The closer the stones lie, and the better they are squared to fit one another, the stronger is the building.

Now observe the reason, why Christians must please one another; *for even Christ pleased not himself*. The self-denial of our Lord Jesus is the best argument against the selfishness of Christians. Observe,

(1.) That Christ *pleased not himself*. He did not consult his own worldly credit, ease, safety, or pleasure; he had not where to lay his head, lived upon alms, would not be made a king; detested no proposal with greater abhorrence than that, *Master, spare thyself*; did not *seek his own will*, *John v. 30.* washed his disciples' feet, endured the contradiction of sinners against himself, troubled himself, *John xi. 33.* did not consult his own honour; and, in a word, emptied himself, and made himself of no reputation: And all this for our sakes, to bring in a righteousness for us, and to set us an example. His whole life was a self-denying, self-displeasing life. He bore the *infirmities of the weak*, *Heb. iv. 15.*

(2.) That herein the scripture was fulfilled. *As it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee, fell on me.* This is quoted out of *Psal. lxxix. 9.* the former part of which verse is applied to Christ, *John ii. 17.* *The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up*: and the latter part here; for David was a type of Christ, and his sufferings, of Christ's sufferings.

It is quoted to shew, that Christ was so far from pleasing himself, that he did, in the highest degree, displease himself: Not as if his undertaking, considered in the whole, were a task and grievance to him, for he was very willing to it, and very cheerful in it; but in his humiliation, the content and satisfaction of natural inclination was altogether crossed and denied: He preferred our benefit before his own ease and pleasure. This the apostle chuseth to express in scripture language; for how can the things of the Spirit of God be better spoken of, than in the Spirit's own words? And that scripture he alledgeth, *The reproaches of them that reproached thee, fell on me.*

1. The shame of those reproaches Christ underwent. Whatever dishonour was done to God, was a trouble to the Lord Jesus. He was grieved for the hardness of peoples hearts, beheld a sinful place with sorrow and tears. When the saints were persecuted, Christ so far displeased himself, as to take what was done to them as done against himself: Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? Christ also did himself endure the greatest indignities; there was much of *reproach* in his sufferings.

2. The sin of those reproaches Christ undertook to satisfy for; so many understand it. Every sin is a kind of reproach to God, especially presumptuous sins; now the guilt of these fell upon Christ, when he was made sin, *i. e.* a sacrifice, a sin-offering for us. When the Lord laid upon him the iniquities of us all, and he bore our sins in his own body upon the tree, they fell upon him as upon our surety. Upon me be the curse.

This was the greatest piece of self-dispency that could be; considering his infinite spotless purity and holiness; the infinite love of the Father to him, and his eternal concern for his Father's glory; nothing could be more contrary to him, nor more against him, than to be made sin and a curse for us, and to have the reproaches of God fall upon him; especially, considering for whom he thus displeased himself, for strangers, enemies, and traitors; the *just for the unjust*, *1 Pet. iii. 18.*

This seems to come in as a reason, *why we should bear the infirmities of the weak*. We must not please ourselves, for Christ pleased not himself; we must bear the infirmities of the weak, for Christ bore the reproaches of those that reproached God. He bore the guilt of sin, and the curse for it; we are only called to bear a little of the trouble of it. He bore the presumptuous sins of the wicked, we are called only to bear the infirmities of the weak.

Even Christ; *ὅς γὰρ ὁ Χριστός*. Even he who was infinitely happy in the enjoyment of himself, who needed not us or our services; even he who thought it no robbery to be equal with God, who had reason enough to please himself, and no reason to be concerned, much less to be crossed for us; even he pleased not himself, even he bore our sins: And should not we be humble and self-denying, and ready to consider one another, who are members one of another?

3. That therefore we must go and do likewise: *For whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning.* (1.) That which is written of Christ, concerning his self-denial and sufferings, is *written for our learning*; he hath left us an example.

example. If Christ denied himself, surely we should deny ourselves from a principle of ingenuity, and of gratitude, and especially of conformity to his image. The example of Christ in what he did and said, is recorded for our imitation. (2.) That which is written in the scriptures of the Old Testament in the general, is written for our learning. What David had said in his own person, Paul had just now applied to Christ. Now, lest this should look like a straining of the scripture, he gives us this excellent rule in general, that all the scriptures of the Old Testament (much more those of the new) were written *for our learning*, and are not to be looked upon as of *private interpretation*. What happened to the Old Testament saints, happened to them for example; and the scriptures of the Old Testament have many fulfillings. The scriptures are left for a standing rule to us: They are *written*, that they might *remain* for our use and benefit.

(1.) For our *learning*. There are many things to be learned out of the scripture; and that is the best learning that is drawn from those fountains. Those are the most learned, that are most mighty in the scriptures. We must therefore labour, not only to understand the literal meaning of the scripture, but to learn out of it that which will do us good; and have need of help therefore not only to roll away the stone, but to draw out the water; for in many places the well is *deep*. Practical observations are more necessary than critical expositions.

(2.) That *we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope*. That *hope* which hath eternal life for its object, is here proposed as the end of scripture-learning. The scripture was written, that we might know what to hope for from God, and upon what grounds, and in what way.

This should recommend the scripture to us, that it is a special friend to Christian hope: Now the way of attaining this hope, is *through patience and comfort of the scripture*. *Patience* and *comfort* suppose trouble and sorrow; such is the lot of the saints in this world; and were it not so, we should have no occasion for *patience* and *comfort*: But both these befriend that hope, which is the life of our souls. *Patience* works *experience*, and *experience*, *hope*, that maketh not ashamed, *Rom. v. 3, 4, 5*. The more patience we exercise under troubles, the more hopefully we may look through our troubles; nothing more destructive to hope than impatience.

And the *comfort of the scriptures*, i. e. that comfort which springs from the word of God (that is the surest and sweetest comfort) is likewise a great stay to hope, as it is an earnest in hand of the good hoped for. The Spirit, as a *comforter*, is the earnest of our inheritance.

5. Now the God of patience and consolation, grant you to be like-minded one towards another, according to Christ Jesus: 6. That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The apostle having delivered two exhortations, before he proceeds to more, intermixes here a prayer for the success of what he had said. Faithful ministers water their preaching with their prayers, because whoever sows the seed, it is God that gives the *increase*. We can but speak to the ear, it is God's prerogative to speak to the heart. Observe,

1. The title he gives to God; the *God of patience and consolation*: Who is both the author and the foundation of all the patience and consolation of the saints; from whom it springs, and on whom it is built. He gives the grace of *patience*, he confirms and keeps it up as the God of *consolation*; for the comforts of the Holy Ghost help to support believers, and to bear them up with courage and cheerfulness under all their afflictions. When he comes to beg the pouring out of a Spirit of love and unity, he addresseth himself to God as the *God of patience and consolation*; i. e. (1.) As a God that bears with us, and comforts us; is not extreme to mark what we do amiss, but is ready to comfort them that are cast down; to teach us so to testify our love to our brethren, and by these means to preserve and maintain unity, by being patient one with another, and comfortable one to another. Or, (2.) As a God that gives us *patience and comfort*. He had spoken, *ver. 4*. of patience and comfort of the scriptures; but here he looks up to God, as the God of *patience and consolation*: It comes through the scripture as the conduit-pipe, but from God as the fountain-head. The more patience and comfort we receive from God, the better disposed we are to love one another. Nothing breaks the peace more than an impatient and peevish, and fretful, melancholy temper.

2. The mercy he begs of God: *Grant you to be like-minded one towards another, according to Jesus Christ*. (1.) The foundation of Christian love and peace is laid in like-mindedness; a consent in judgment, as far as you have attained; or, however, a concord and agreement in affection. *Τὸ αὐτὸ φρονεῖν*; to mind the *same thing*, all occasions of difference removed, and all quarrels laid aside. (2.) This like-mindedness must be *according to Christ Jesus*; according to the precept of Christ, the royal law of love, according to the pattern and example of Christ, which he

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had propounded to them for their imitation, *ver. 3*. Or, let Christ Jesus be the center of their unity: Agree in the truth, not in any error. It was a cursed concord and harmony of those who were of one mind to give their power and strength to the beast, *Rev. xvii. 13*. that was not a like-mindedness according to Christ, but against Christ; like the Babel builders, who were *one* in their rebellion, *Gen. xi. 6*. The method of our prayer must be, first for truth, and then for peace; for such is the method of the wisdom that is from above; it is first pure, then peaceable: That is to be like-minded according to Christ Jesus. (3.) Like-mindedness among Christians, according to Christ Jesus, is the gift of God; and a precious gift it is, for which we must earnestly seek unto him. He is the *Father of spirits*, and fashioneth the hearts of men alike, *Psal. xxxiii. 15*. opens the understanding, softens the heart, sweetens the affections, and gives the grace of love, and the Spirit as a Spirit of love to those that ask him. We are taught to pray, that the will of God may be done on earth, as it is done in heaven: Now, there it is done unanimously, among the angels, who are one in their praises and services; and our desire must be, that the saints on earth may be so too.

3. The end of his desire; that God may be glorified, *ver. 6*. This is his plea with God in prayer, and is likewise an argument with them to endeavour it. We should have the glory of God in our eye in every prayer; therefore our first petition, as the foundation of all the rest, must be, *Hallowed be thy name*.

Like-mindedness among Christians, is in order to our glorifying of God.

1. With *one mind and one mouth*. It is desirable, that Christians should agree in every thing, that so they may agree in this, to praise God together. It tends very much to the glory of God, who is one, and his name one, when it is so. It will not suffice, that there be one mouth, but there must be one mind; for God looks at the heart; nay, there will hardly be one mouth, where there is not one mind; and God will scarce be glorified, where there is not a sweet conjunction of both. One mouth in confessing the truths of God, in praising the name of God; *one mouth* in common converse, not jarring, biting and devouring one another; *one mouth* in the solemn assembly; one speaking, but all joining.

2. As *the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*. That is his New Testament stile. God must be glorified as he has now revealed himself in the face of Jesus Christ; according to the rules of the gospel, and with an eye to Christ, in whom he is our Father. The unity of Christians glorifies God as *the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*; because it is a kind of counter-part or representation of the oneness, that is between the Father and the Son. We are warranted so to speak of it, and with that in our eye to desire it, and pray for it, from *John xvii. 21*. *That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee*: A high expression of the honour and sweetness of the saints unity. And it follows, *That the world may believe that thou hast sent me*; and so God may be glorified as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

7. Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us, to the glory of God. 8. Now I say, that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers: 9. And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name. 10. And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people. 11. And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles, and laud him, all ye people. 12. And again Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust.

The apostle here returns to his exhortation to Christians. What he says here, *ver. 7*. is to the same purpose with the former; but the repetition shews how much the apostle's heart was upon it.

Receive one another into your affection, into your communion, and into your common conversation, as there is occasion. He had exhorted the strong to receive the weak, *chap. xiv. 1*. here, *receive one another*; for sometimes the prejudices of the weak Christian make him shy of the strong, as much as the pride of the strong Christian makes him shy of the weak; neither of which ought to be. Let there be a mutual embracing among Christians. Those that have received Christ by faith, must receive all Christians by brotherly love; though poor in the world, though persecuted and despised, though it may be matter of reproach and danger to you to receive them; though in the less weighty matters of the law they are of different apprehensions, though they may have been occasion for private piques; yet laying aside these, and the like considerations, *receive ye one another*.

Now, the reason why Christians must receive one another, is taken as before, from the condescending love of Christ to us. *As Christ also received us, to the glory of God*. Can there be a more

cogent argument? Hath Christ been so kind to us, and shall we be unkind to those that are his? Was he so forward to entertain us, and shall we be backward to entertain our brethren? Christ has received us into the nearest and dearest relations to himself; hath received us into his fold, into his family, into the adoption of sons, into a covenant of friendship, yea, into a marriage covenant with himself; hath received us, though we were strangers, and enemies, and had played the prodigal, into fellowship and communion with himself.

Those words, *to the glory of God*, may refer both to Christ's receiving us, which is our pattern; and to our receiving one another, which is our practice according to that pattern.

1. Christ hath received us *to the glory of God*. The end of our reception by Christ is, that we might glorify God in this world, and be glorified with him in that to come. It was the glory of God, and our glory in the enjoyment of God, that Christ had in his eye, when he condescended to receive us. We are called to an eternal glory by Christ Jesus, *John xvii. 24*. See to what he received us, to a happiness transcending all comprehension; see for what he received us, for his Father's glory; he had that in his eye in all the instances of his favour to us.

2. We must receive one another *to the glory of God*. That must be our great end in all our actions, that God may be glorified; and nothing doth more conduce to that, than the mutual love and kindness of those that profess religion, compare *ver. 6*. *That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God*.

That which was a bone of contention among them, was a different apprehension about meats and drinks, which took rise in distinction between Jews and Gentiles. Now, to prevent and make up this difference, he shews how Jesus Christ hath received both Jews and Gentiles; in him they are both one, *one new man*, *Eph. ii. 14, 15, 16*. Now it is a rule; *quæ conveniunt in aliquo tertio inter se conveniunt*. Those that agree in Christ, who is the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, and the great center of unity, may well afford to agree among themselves. This coalescence of the Jews and Gentiles in Christ and Christianity, was a thing that filled and affected Paul so much, that he could nor mention it without some enlargement and illustration.

(1.) He received the Jews, *ver. 8*. Let not any think hardly or scornfully therefore of those that were originally Jews, and still through weakness retain some favour of their old Judaism; for,

First, Jesus Christ was a *minister of the circumcision*. That he was a *minister*, *διδάκτωρ*, a servant, speaks his great and exemplary condescension, and puts an honour upon the ministry: But that he was a minister of the *circumcision*, was himself circumcised, and made under the law, and did in his own person preach the gospel to the Jews, who were of the *circumcision*; this makes the nation of the Jews more considerable, than otherwise they appear to be. Christ conversed with the Jews, blessed them, looked upon himself as primarily sent to the *lost sheep of the house of Israel*, laid hold of the seed of Abraham, *Heb. ii. 16*. *marg.* and by them, as it were, caught at the whole body of mankind: Christ's personal ministry was appropriated to them, though the apostles had their commission enlarged.

Secondly, He was so for *the truth of God*. That which he preached to them, was the *truth*; for he came into the world to bear witness to the truth, *John xviii. 37*. And he is himself the truth, *John xiv. 6*. Or, for *the truth of God*, i. e. to make good the promises given to the patriarchs, concerning the special mercy God had in store for their seed. It was not for the merit of the Jews, but for *the truth of God*, that they were thus distinguished; that God might approve himself true to this world which he had spoken.

To confirm the promises made unto the fathers. The best confirmation of promises is the performance of them. It was promised, that in the seed of Abraham all the nations of the earth should be blessed; that Shiloh should come from between the feet of Judah; that out of Israel should proceed he that should have the dominion; that out of Sion should go forth the law; and many the like. There were many intermediate providences, which seemed to weaken those promises; providences which threatened the fatal decay of that people: But when Messiah the prince appeared in the fulness of time, as a *minister of the circumcision*, all these promises were confirmed, and the truth of them was made to appear; for in Christ all the promises of God, both those of the Old Testament, and those of the New, are yea, and in him Amen. Understanding by *the promises made to the fathers*, the whole covenant of grace, darkly administered under the Old Testament, and brought to a clearer light now under the gospel; it was Christ's great errand to confirm that covenant, *Dan. ix. 27*. He confirmed it by shedding the blood of the covenant.

(2.) He received the Gentiles likewise. This he shews, *ver. 9, 10, 11, 12*.

First, Observe Christ's favour to the Gentiles, in taking them in to praise God, the work of the church on earth, and the wages of that in heaven. One design of Christ was, that the Gentiles likewise might be converted; that they might be one with the Jews in Christ's mystical body. A good reason why they should not think the worse of any Christian for his having been formerly a Gentile; for Christ hath received him. He invites

the Gentiles, and welcomes them. Now observe how their conversion is here expressed; *That the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy*. A periphrasis of conversion.

1. They shall have matter for praise, even the *mercy* of God. Considering the miserable and deplorable condition that the Gentile world was in, the receiving of them appears more as an act of *mercy*, than the receiving of the Jews.

They that were Lo-ammi, not a people, were Lo-ruhamah, not obtaining *mercy*, *Hos. i. 6, 9*.—ii. *ult.* The greatest mercy of God to any people, is the receiving of them into covenant with himself: And it is good to take notice of God's mercy in receiving us.

2. They shall have a heart for praise. They shall *glorify God for his mercy*. Unconverted sinners do nothing to glorify God; but converting grace works in the soul a disposition to speak and do all to the glory of God, God intended to reap a harvest of glory from the Gentiles, who had been so long turning his glory into shame.

Secondly, The fulfilling of the scriptures in this. The favour of God to the Gentiles, was not only mercy, but *truth*: Though there were not promises directly given to them, as to the *fathers* of the *Jews*; yet there were many prophecies concerning them, which related to the calling of them, and the embodying of them in the church: Some of which he mentions, because it was a thing that the Jews were hardly persuaded to believe. Thus, by referring them to the Old Testament, he labours to qualify their dislike of the Gentiles, and so to reconcile the parties at variance.

1. It was foretold, that the Gentiles should have the gospel preached to them. *I will confess to thee among the Gentiles*, *ver. 9*. i. e. thy name shall be known, and owned in the Gentile world; there shall gospel grace and love be celebrated. This is quoted from *Psal. xviii. 49*. *I will give thanks unto thee, O Lord, among the heathen*. A thankful explication, and commemoration of the name of God, is an excellent means of drawing others to know and praise God. Christ, in and by his apostles and ministers, whom he sent to disciple all nations, did confess to God among the Gentiles. The exaltation of Christ, as well as the conversion of sinners, is set forth by the praising of God. Christ's declaring God's name to his brethren, is called his praising of God in the midst of the congregation, *Psal. xxii. 22*.

Taking these words as spoken by David, they were spoken when he was old and dying, and he was not likely to confess to God among the Gentiles: But when David's psalms are read and sung among the Gentiles, to the praise and glory of God; it may be said, that David is *confessing to God among the Gentiles*, and *singing to his name*. He that was the sweet psalmist of Israel, is now the sweet psalmist of the Gentiles: Converting grace makes people greatly in love with David's psalms. Taking them as spoken by Christ the Son of David, it may be understood of his spiritual indwelling by faith in the hearts of all the praising saints.

If any confess to God among the Gentiles, and sing to his name, it is not they, but Christ and his grace in them. I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; so, I praise, yet not I, but Christ in me.

2. That the Gentiles should *rejoice with his people*, *ver. 10*. This is quoted from that song of Moses, *Deut. xxxii. 43*. Observe, that those who were incorporated among his people, are said to rejoice with his people. No greater joy can come to any people, than the coming of the gospel among them in power. Those Jews that retain a prejudice against the Gentiles, will by no means admit them to any of their joyful festivities; for (say they) a stranger intermeddleth not with the joy, *Prov. xiv. 10*. But the partition-wall being taken down, the Gentiles are welcome to rejoice with his people. Being brought in the church, they share in its sufferings, are companions in patience and tribulation; to recompense which they share in the joy.

3. That they should praise God, *ver. 11*. *Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles*. This is quoted out of that short psalm, *Psal. cxvii. 1*. Converting grace sets people a praising God, furnisheth with the richest matter for praise, and gives a heart to it. The Gentiles had been, for many ages, praising their idols of wood and stone, but now they are brought to praise the Lord; and this, David in spirit speaks of. In calling upon all the nations to praise the Lord, it is intimated, that they shall have the knowledge of him.

4. That they should believe in Christ, *ver. 12*. quoted from *Isa. xi. 10*. Where observe,

(1.) The revelation of Christ as the Gentiles king. He is here called *the root of Jesse*, i. e. such a branch from the family of David, as is the very life and strength of the family, compare *Isa. xi. 1*. Christ was David's Lord, and yet withal he was the Son of David, *Matt. xxii. 45*. for he was the *root and offspring of David*, *Rev. xxii. 16*. Christ, as God, was David's root; Christ, as man, was David's offspring.

And he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles. This explains the figurative expression of the prophet, he shall *stand for an ensign of the people*. When Christ rose from the dead, when he ascended on high, it was to reign over the Gentiles.

(2.) The recourse of the Gentiles to him. *In him shall the Gentiles trust*. Faith is the soul's confidence in Christ, and dependence

pendence on him. The prophet hath it, *to him shall the Gentiles seek*. The method of faith is, first to seek unto Christ, as to one proposed to us for a saviour; and finding him able and willing to save, then to trust in him. They that know him, will trust in him. Or, this seeking to him is the effect of a trust in him; seeking him by prayer, and pursuant endeavours. We shall never seek to Christ till we trust in him. Trust, is the mother; diligence, in the use of means, the daughter.

Jews and Gentiles being thus united in Christ's love, why should they not be united in one another's love?

13. Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the holy Ghost.

Here is another prayer directed to God, as the *God of hope*; and it is, as the former, *ver. 5, 6.* for spiritual blessings. Those are the best blessings, and to be first and chiefly prayed for.

1. Observe how he addresseth himself to God, as the *God of hope*. It is good in prayer to fasten upon those names, titles, and attributes of God, which are most suitable to the errand we come upon, and will best serve to encourage our faith concerning it. Every word in the prayer should be a plea. Thus should the cause be skilfully ordered, and the mouth filled with arguments. God is the *God of hope*. He is the foundation on which our hope is built, and he is the builder that doth himself raise it: he is both the object of our hope, and the author of it. That hope is but fancy, and will deceive us, which is not fastened upon God, as the goodness hoped for, and the truth hoped in, and which is not of his working in us. We have both together, *Psal. cxix. 49. Thy word*, (there is God the object) *on which thou hast caused me to hope*, there is God the author of our hope, *1 Pet. i. 4.*

2. What he asketh of God; not for himself, but for them.

(1.) *That they might be filled with all joy and peace in believing*. Joy and peace are two of those things in which the kingdom of God consists, *chap. xiv. 17.* Joy in God, peace of conscience, both arising from a sense of our justification; see *chap. v. 1, 2.* Joy and peace in our own bosoms, would promote a cheerful unity and unanimity with our brethren. Observe,

First, How desirable this joy and peace is; it is filling. Carnal joy puffs up the soul, but cannot fill it; therefore in laughter the heart is sad. True, heavenly, spiritual joy is filling to the soul; it hath a satisfaction in it answerable to the soul's vast and just desires: Thus doth God satiate and replenish the weary soul. Nothing more than this joy, only more of it, even the perfection of it in glory, is the desire of the soul that hath it, *Psal. iv. 6, 7.—xxxvi. 8.—lxiii. 5.—lxv. 4.*

Secondly, How it is attainable. 1. By prayer. We must go to God for it; he will for this be enquired of. Prayer fetcheth in spiritual joy and peace. 2. By believing; that is the means to be used. It is vain, and flashy, and transient joy, that is the product of fancy; true substantial joy is the fruit of faith. *Believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable*, *1 Pet. i. 8.* It is owing to the weakness of our faith, that we are so much wanting in joy and peace. Only believe; believe the goodness of Christ, the love of Christ, the promises of the covenant, and the joys and glories of heaven; let faith be the substance and evidence of these things, and the result must needs be joy and peace.

Observe, It is *all* joy and peace; all sorts of true joy and peace. When we come to God by prayer, we must enlarge our desires; we are not straitened in him, why should we be straitened in our selves? Ask for *all* joy; open thy mouth wide and he will fill it.

(2.) *That they might abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost*. The joy and peace of believers ariseth chiefly from their hopes. What is laid out upon them, is but little, compared with what is laid up for them; therefore the more hope they have the more joy and peace they have. We do then *abound* in hope, when we hope for great things from God, and are greatly established and confirmed in these hopes. Christians should desire and labour after an abundance of hope, such hope as will not make ashamed. This is through the *power of the Holy Ghost*. The same almighty power that works grace, begets and strengthens this hope. Our own power will never reach it; and therefore where this hope is, and is abounding, the blessed Spirit must have all the glory.

14. And I my self also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.

15. Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you, in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God, 16. That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the holy Ghost.

Here, 1. He commends these Christians with the highest characters that could be. He began his epistle with their praises, *Rom. i. 8. Your faith is spoken of throughout the world*, thereby to make way for his discourse: and now he concludes with the like commendation, because sometimes he had reprov'd them sharply, to qualify them, and to part friends. This he doth like an orator. It was not a piece of idle flattery and compliment, but a due acknowledgment of their worth, and of the grace of God in them. We must be forward to observe and commend that in others which is excellent and praise-worthy; it is part of the present recompence of virtue and usefulness, and will be of use to quicken others to a holy emulation. It was a great credit to the Romans to be commended by Paul, a man of so great judgment and integrity, too skilful to be deceived, and too honest to flatter.

Paul had no personal acquaintance with these Christians, and yet he saith, he was *persuaded* of their excellencies, though he knew it only by hearsay. As we must not, on the one hand, be so simple as to believe every word; so, on the other hand, we must not be so wilful as to believe nothing; but especially we must be forward to believe good concerning others; in that case charity hopeth all things, and believeth all things, and (if the probabilities be any thing strong, as here they were) is *persuaded*. It is safer to err on that hand.

Now observe what it was that he commended them for.

(1.) *That they were full of goodness*; therefore the more likely to take in good part what he had written, and to account it a kindness; and not only so, but to comply with it, and to put it in practice; especially that which relates to their union, and to the healing of their differences. A good understanding of one another, and a good will to one another, would soon put an end to strife.

(2.) *Fitted with all knowledge*. Goodness and knowledge together! A very rare and an excellent conjunction; the head and the heart of the new man. All *knowledge*, all necessary knowledge, all the knowledge of those things which belong to their everlasting peace.

(3.) *Able to admonish one another*. To this there is a further gift requisite, even the gift of utterance. Those that have *goodness* and *knowledge* should communicate, what they have for the use and benefit of others: *q. d.* You that excel so much in good gifts, may think you have no need of any instructions of mine. It is a comfort to faithful ministers, to see their work superseded by the gifts and graces of their people. How gladly would ministers leave off their admonishing work, if people were able and willing to admonish one another! Would to God, that all the Lord's people were prophets. But that which is every body's work, is no body's work; and therefore,

2. He clears himself from the suspicion of intermeddling needlessly with that which did not belong to him, *ver. 15.* Observe how lovingly he speaks to them: *My brethren*, *ver. 14.* and again, *brethren*, *ver. 15.* He had himself, and taught others the art of obliging. He calls them all his brethren, to teach them brotherly love one to another. Probably he wrote the more courteously to them, because being Roman citizens, living near the court, they were more genteel, and made a better figure; and therefore Paul, who became all things to all men, was willing, by the respectfulness of his style, to please them for their good. He acknowledgeth he had written *boldly in some sort*; *πολὺ μὲν ὡς*, in a manner that looked like boldness and presumption, and for which some might perhaps charge him with taking too much upon him. But then consider,

(1.) He did it only as their remembrancer, as *putting you in mind*. Such humble thoughts had Paul of himself, though he excelled in knowledge, that he would not pretend to tell them that which they did not know before; but only to mind them of that in which they had formerly been by others instructed. So Peter, *2 Pet. i. 12.—iii. 1.* People commonly excuse themselves from the hearing of the word, that the minister can tell them nothing but what they knew before: If it be so, yet have they not need to know it better, and to be put in mind of it?

(2.) He did it as the apostle of the Gentiles. It was in pursuance of his office. *Because of the grace* (i. e. the *apostleship*, *chap. i. 13.*) *given to me of God*, viz. to be the minister of *Jesus Christ to the Gentiles*, *ver. 16.* Paul reckoned it a great favour, and an honour that God had put upon him, in putting him into that office, *chap. i. 13.* Now because of this grace given to him, he thus laid out himself among the Gentiles, that he might not receive the grace of God in vain. Christ received that he might give; so did Paul; so have we talents which must not be buried. Places and offices must be filled up with duty. It is good for ministers to be often remembring the grace that is given unto them of God. *Minister verbi es, hoc age*, was Mr. Perkins's motto. Paul was a minister. Observe here,

First, Whose minister he was: the *minister of Jesus Christ*, *1 Cor. iv. 1.* He is our master; his we are, and him we serve.

Secondly, To whom? To the Gentiles. So God had appointed him, *Acts xxii. 21.* So Peter and he had agreed, *Gal. ii. 7, 8, 9.* These Romans were Gentiles; now, saith he, I do not thrust myself upon you, or seek any lordship over you; I am appointed

to it : if you think I am rude and bold, my commission is my warrant, and must bear me out.

Thirdly, What he ministred ; the *gospel of God* ; *ἡ εὐαγγελία τοῦ θεοῦ* ; ministring as about holy things ; so the word signifies ; executing the office of a Christian priest, more spiritual, and therefore more excellent than the Levitical priesthood.

Fourthly, For what end ? *That the offering up* (or sacrificing) *of the Gentiles might be acceptable*, i. e. that God may have the glory, which would redound to his name by the conversion of the Gentiles. Paul laid out himself thus to bring about something that might be acceptable to God. Observe how the conversion of the Gentiles is expressed : it is the *offering up of the Gentiles* ; it is *προσφορά τῶν ἐθνῶν*, the *oblation of the Gentiles*. In which the Gentiles are looked upon, either, (1.) As the priests offering the oblation of prayer and praise, and other acts of religion. Long had the Jews been the holy nation, the kingdom of priests ; but now the Gentiles are become priests unto God, *Rev. v. 10.* by their conversion to the Christian faith consecrated to the service of God, that the scripture might be fulfilled, *Mal. i. 11. In every place incense shall be offered, and a pure offering.* The converted Gentiles are said to be *made nigh*, *Ephes. ii. 13.* the periphrasis of priests. Or (2.) The Gentiles are themselves the sacrifice offered up to God by Paul, in the name of Christ ; a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *chap. xii. 1.* A sanctified soul is offered up to God, in the flames of love, upon Christ the altar. Paul gathered in souls by his preaching, not to keep them to himself, but to offer them up to God : *Behold I and the children that God hath given me.* And it is an acceptable offering ; *being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.* Paul preached to them, and dealt with them, but that which made them sacrifices to God, was their sanctification ; and that was not his work, but the work of the Holy Ghost. None are acceptably offered to God, but those that are sanctified : unholy things can never be pleasing to the holy God.

17. I have therefore wherof I may glory through Jesus Christ, in those things which pertain to God. 18. For I will not dare to speak of any of those things, which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed, 19. Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God ; so that from Jerusalem and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. 20. Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another mans foundation : 21. But as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see : and they that have not heard, shall understand.

The apostle here gives some account of himself and of his own affairs. Having mentioned his ministry and apostleship, he goes on further to magnify his office in the efficacy of it ; and to mention to the glory of God the great success of his ministry, and the wonderful things that God hath done by him ; for encouragement to the Christian church at Rome, that they were not alone in the profession of Christianity ; but though compared with the multitude of their idolatrous neighbours, they were but a little flock, yet up and down the country there were many that were their companions in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ. It was likewise a great confirmation of the truth of the Christian doctrine, that it had such strange success, and was so far propagated by such weak and unlikely means ; such multitudes captivated to the obedience of Christ by the foolishness of preaching. Therefore Paul gives them this account ; which he makes the matter of his *glorying* ; not vain glory, but holy, gracious glorying ; which appears by the limitations ; it is *through Jesus Christ* : Thus doth he center all his glorying in Christ ; he teacheth us to do so, *1 Cor. i. ult.* Not unto us, *Psal. cxv. 5.* And it is *in those things which pertain to God.* The conversion of souls is one of those things that pertain to God, and therefore is the matter of Paul's glorying ; not the things of the flesh.

Whereof I may glory, *ἐξ ὧν ἐν κἀνυχισιν ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τὰ πρὸς θεόν*. I would rather read it thus : *Therefore I have a rejoicing in Christ Jesus* (it is the same word that is used *2 Cor. i. 12.* and *Phil. iii. 3.* where it is the character of the circumcision, that they rejoice, *καυχώμενοι*, in Christ Jesus) *concerning the things of God* ; or those things that are offered to God, *viz.* the living sacrifices of the Gentiles, *ver. 16.* Paul would have them to rejoice with him in the extent and efficacy of his ministry ; of which he speaks not only with the greatest deference possible to the power of Christ, and the effectual working of the Spirit as all in all ; but with a protestation of the truth of what he said, *ver. 18. I will not dare to speak of any of those things, which Christ hath not wrought by me.* He would not boast of things without his line, nor take the praise of another man's work, as he might have done when he was writing to distant strangers, who perhaps could not contradict him ; but (saith he) I dare not do it : a faithful man dares not lye, however he be tempted ; dares be true, however he be terrified.

Now in this account of himself, we may observe,

1. His unwearied diligence and industry in his work. He was one that laboured more abundantly than they all.

(1.) He preached in many places. *From Jerusalem*, whence the law went forth as a lamp that shineth, and round about unto *Illyricum*, many hundred miles distant from Jerusalem. We have in the book of the Acts an account of Paul's travels. There we find him after he was sent forth to preach to the Gentiles, *Acts xiii.* labouring in that blessed work in Seleucia, Cyprus, Pamphylia, Pisidia, and Lycaonia, *chap. xiii. xiv.* Afterwards travelling through Syria and Cilicia, Phrygia, Galatia, Mysia, Troas ; and thence called over to Macedonia, and so into Europe, *chap. xv. xvi.* Then we find him very busy at Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, and the parts adjacent : And those that know the extent and distance of these countries, will conclude Paul an active man, rejoicing as a strong man to run a race. Illyricum is the country now called Slavonia, bordering upon Hungary. Some take it for the same with Bulgaria ; others for the lower Pannonia : however it was a great way from Jerusalem. Now it might be suspected, that if Paul undertook so much work, surely he did it by the halves : No, saith he, *I have fully preached the gospel of Christ* ; gave them a full account of the truth and terms of the gospel ; shunned not to declare the whole counsel of God, *Acts xx. 27.* kept back nothing that was necessary for them to know. *Filled the gospel*, so the word is ; *πεπληρωμένοι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον*, filled it as the net is filled with fishes in a large draught ; or filled the gospel, i. e. filled them with the gospel. Such a change doth the gospel make, that when it comes in power to any place, it fills the place. Other knowledge is airy, and leaves souls empty, but the knowledge of the gospel is filling.

(2.) He preached in places that had not heard the gospel before, *ver. 20, 21.* He broke up fallow ground, laid the first stone in many places, and introduced Christianity there, where nothing had reigned for many ages, but idolatry and witchcraft, and all sorts of diabolism. Paul broke the ice, and therefore must needs meet with the more difficulties and discouragements in his work. Those that preached in Judea, had, upon this account, a much easier task than Paul, who was the apostle of the Gentiles ; for they entered into the labours of others, *John iv. 38.*

Paul being a hardy man, was called out to the hardest work ; there were many instructors, but Paul was the great father ; many that watered, but Paul was the great planter. Well, he was a bold man that made the first attack upon the palace of the strong man armed in the Gentile world ; that first assaulted Satan's interest there ; and Paul was that man who ventured the first onset in many places, and suffered greatly for it. He mentions this as a proof of his apostleship ; for the office of the apostles was especially to bring in those that were without, and to lay the foundations of the new Jerusalem ; see *Rev. xxi. 14.* Not but that Paul preached in many places, where others had been at work before him ; but he principally and mainly laid himself out for the good of those that sat in darkness. He was in care not to *build upon another man's foundation*, lest he should thereby disprove his apostleship, and give occasion to those who sought occasion to reflect upon him. He quotes a scripture for this, out of *Isa. lii. 15.* *To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see.* *That which had not been told them, shall they see* ; so the prophet hath it, much to the same purpose. This made the success of Paul's preaching the more remarkable. The transition from darkness to light is more sensible, than the after-growth and increase of that light. And commonly the greatest success of the gospel is at its first coming to a place ; afterwards people become sermon-proof.

2. The great and wonderful success that he had in this work. It was effectual to *make the Gentiles obedient*. The design of the gospel is to bring people to be *obedient* ; it is not only a truth to be believed, but a law to be obeyed. This Paul aimed at in all his travels ; not his own wealth and honour, (if he had, he had sadly missed his aim) but the conversion and salvation of souls : that his heart was upon, and for that he travelled in birth again.

Now, how was this great work wrought ?

(1.) Christ was the principal agent. He doth not say, which I worked, but which Christ wrought by me, *ver. 18.* Whatever good we do, it is not we, but Christ by us that doth it ; the work is his, the strength his ; he is all in all, he worketh all our works, *Phil. ii. 13.* *Isa. xxvi. 12.* Paul takes all occasions to own this, that the whole praise might be transmitted to Christ.

(2.) Paul was a very active instrument : *By word and deed*, i. e. by his preaching, and by the miracles he wrought to confirm his doctrine ; or his preaching and his living. Those ministers are likely to win souls, that preach both by *word* and *deed* ; by their conversation shewing forth the power of the truths they preach. This is according to Christ's example, who began both to *do* and *teach*, *Acts i. 11.*

Through mighty signs and wonders : *ἐν δυνάμει σημείων*, by the power, or in the strength of signs and wonders. These made the preaching of the word so effectual, being the appointed means of conviction, and the divine seal affixed to the gospel-charter, *Mark xvi. 17, 18.*

(3.) The power of the Spirit of God made this effectual, and crowned all with the desired success, *ver. 19.* (1.) The power of the Spirit in Paul, as in other the apostles, for the working of those miracles. Miracles were wrought by the power of the Holy Ghost, *Acts i. 8.* therefore reproaching the miracles is called the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. Or, (2.) The power of the Spirit

Spirit in the hearts of those, to whom the word was preached, and who saw the miracles, making these means effectual to some and not to others. It is the Spirit's operation that makes the difference. Paul himself, as great a preacher as he was, with all his mighty signs and wonders, could not make one soul obedient farther than the power of the Spirit of God accompanied his labours. It was the Spirit of the Lord of hosts, that made those great mountains plain before this Zerubbabel. This is an encouragement to faithful ministers, who labour under the sense of great weakness and infirmity, that it is all one to the blessed Spirit to work by many, or by those that have no power. The same almighty Spirit that wrought with Paul, often perfecteth strength in weakness, and ordains praise out of the mouth of babes and sucklings. This success, which he had in preaching, is that which he here rejoiceth in; for the converted nations were his joy, and crown of rejoicing: and he tells them of it, not only that they might rejoice with him, but that they might be the more ready to receive the truths which he had written to them, and to own him whom Christ had thus signally owned.

22. For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you. 23. But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you; 24. Whenever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company. 25. But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. 26. For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia, to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem. 27. It hath pleased them verily, and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things. 28. When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain. 29. And I am sure that when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.

St. Paul here declares his purpose to come and see the Christians at Rome: And upon this head, his matter is but common and ordinary, appointing a visit to his friends; but the manner of his expression is gracious and savoury, and very instructive, and for our imitation. We should learn by it to speak of our common affairs in the language of Canaan. Even our common discourse should have an air of grace; by that it will appear what country we belong to.

It should seem that Paul's company was very much desired at Rome. He was a man that had as many friends and as many enemies as most men ever had: He passed through evil report, and good report. No doubt they had heard much of him at Rome, and longed to see him. Should the apostle of the Gentiles be a stranger at Rome, the metropolis of the Gentile world? Why, as to this, he excuseth it, that he had not come yet, he promiseth to come shortly, and gives a good reason why he could not come now.

1. He excuseth it that he never came yet. Observe, How careful Paul was to keep in with his friends, and to prevent and anticipate any exceptions against him; not as one that lorded it over God's heritage.

(1.) He assures them, that he had a great desire to see them; not to see Rome, though it was now in its greatest pomp and splendor; nor to see the emperor's court; nor to converse with the philosophers and learned men that were then at Rome, though such conversation must needs be very desirable to so great a scholar as Paul was: But *to come unto you*, ver. 23. a company of poor despised saints in Rome, hated of the world, but loving God, and beloved of him. These were the men that Paul was ambitious of an acquaintance with at Rome; they were the excellent ones in whom he delighted, *Psal. xvi. 3.* And he had a special desire to see them, because of the great character they had in all the churches, for faith and holiness; they were men that excelled in virtue, and therefore Paul was so desirous to come to them.

This desire Paul had had for *many years*, and yet could never compass it. The providence of God wisely over-rules the purposes and desires of men. God's dearest servants are not always gratified in every thing that they have a mind to: And yet all that delight in God, have *the desire of their heart fulfilled*, *Psal. xxxvii. 4.* though all the *desires in their heart* be not humoured.

(2.) He tells them, that therefore he could not come to them, because he had so much work cut out for him elsewhere. *For which cause*, i. e. because of his labours in other countries, thence it was that he was so much *hindered*. God had opened a wide door for him in other places, and so diverted him.

No. cvii,

Observe, In this, (1.) The gracious providence of God conversant in a special manner about his ministers, casting their lot, not according to their contrivance, but according to his own purpose. Paul was several times crossed in his intentions; sometimes hindered by Satan, as *2 Theff. ii. 16, 17.* sometimes forbidden by the Spirit, *Acts xvi. 7.* and here diverted by other work. Man purposeth, but God disposeth, *Prov. xvi. 9.—xix. 21. Jer. x. 23.* Ministers purpose, and their friends purpose concerning them, but God over-rules both, and orders the journeys, removes, and settlements of his faithful ministers, as he pleaseth. The stars are in the right hand of Christ to shine where he sets them. The gospel doth not come by chance to any place, but by the will and counsel of God. (2.) The gracious prudence of Paul, in bestowing his time and pains there, where there was most need. Had Paul consulted his own ease, wealth, and honour, the greatness of the work would never have hindered him from seeing Rome, but would rather have driven him thither, where he might have had more preferment, and taken less pains. But Paul fought the things of Christ more than his own things, and therefore would not leave his work of planting churches, no not for a time, to go see Rome. The Romans were whole, and needed not the physician so as other poor places that were sick, and dying. While men and women were every day dropping into eternity, and their precious souls perishing for lack of vision, it was no time for Paul to trifle. There was now a gale of opportunity, the fields were white unto the harvest; such a season slipt might never be retrieved; the necessities of poor souls were pressing, and called loud, and therefore Paul must be busy. It concerns us all to do that first which is most needful. True grace teacheth us to prefer that which is necessary before that which is unnecessary, *Luke x. 41, 42.* And Christian prudence teacheth us to prefer that which is more necessary before that which is less so. This Paul mentions as a sufficient satisfying reason. We must not take it ill of our friends, if they prefer necessary work which is pleasing to God, before unnecessary visits and compliments that may be pleasing to us. In this, as in other things, we must deny ourselves.

2. He promiseth to come and see them shortly, *ver. 23, 24, 29.*

Having no more place in these parts, viz. in Greece, where he then was. The whole of that country being more or less leavened with the favour of the gospel, churches being planted in the most considerable towns, and pastors settled to carry on the work which Paul had begun, he had little more to do there. He had driven the chariot of the gospel to the sea-coast, and having thus conquered Greece, he is ready to wish there were another Greece to conquer. Paul was one that went through with his work, and yet then did not think of taking his ease, but sets himself to contrive more work, to devise liberal things: Here was a workman that needed not be ashamed. Observe,

(1.) How he forecasted his intended visit. His project was to see them in his way *to Spain*. It appears by this, that Paul intended a journey into Spain, to plant Christianity there. The difficulty and peril of the work, the distance of the place, the danger of the voyage, the other good works, (though less needful, he thinks) which Paul might find to do in other places, did not quench the flame of his holy zeal for the propagating of the gospel, which did even eat him up, and make him forget himself. But it is not certain, whether ever he fulfilled this purpose, and went to Spain. Many of the best expositors think he did not, but was hindered in this as he was in others of his purposes. He did indeed come to Rome, but he was brought thither a prisoner, and there was detained two years; and whither he went after, is uncertain: but several of his epistles which he wrote in prison, intimate his purpose to go eastward, and not towards Spain. However, *Paul, forasmuch as it was in thine heart to bring the light of the gospel into Spain, thou didst well, in that it was in thine heart*, as God said to David, *2 Chron. vi. 8.* The grace of God oftentimes with favour accepts the sincere intention, when the providence of God in wisdom prohibits the execution: And do not we serve a good Master then? *2 Cor. viii. 12.*

Now, in his way to Spain he purposed to come to them. Observe his prudence: It is wisdom for every one of us to order our affairs so, as that we may do the most work in the least time.

Observe how doubtfully he speaks, *I trust to see you*: Not, I am resolved I will, but I hope I shall. We must purpose all our purposes, and make all our promises in like manner, with a submission to the divine providence; not boasting ourselves of tomorrow, because we know not what a day may bring forth, *Prov. xxvii. 1. Jam. vi. 13—15.*

(2.) What he expected in this intended visit.

First, What he expected from them. He expected they would bring him on his way towards Spain. It was not a stately attendance, such as princes have, but a loving attendance, such as friends give, that Paul expected. Spain was then a province of the empire, well known to the Romans, who had a great correspondence with it, and therefore they might be helpful to Paul in his voyage thither; and it was not barely the accompanying of him part of the way, but their furthering him in his expedition that he counted upon: Not only out of their respect to Paul, but

out of respect to the souls of those poor Spaniards that Paul was going to preach to. It is justly expected from all Christians, that they should lay out themselves for the promoting and furthering of every good work, especially that blessed work of the conversion of souls; which they should contrive to make as easy as may be to their ministers, and as successful as may be to poor souls.

Secondly, What he expected in them. *To be somewhat filled with their company.* That which Paul desired was their company and conversation. The good company of the saints is very desirable and delightful. Paul was himself a man of great attainments in knowledge and grace, taller by head and shoulders than other Christians in these things, and yet see how he pleased himself with the thoughts of good company; for as iron sharpens iron, so doth a man the countenance of his friend. He intimates, that he intended to make some stay with them, for he would be filled with their company; not just look at them, and away: And yet he thinks their converse so pleasant, that he should never have enough of it; it is but *somewhat* filled, he thought he should leave them with a desire of more of their company. Christian society rightly managed and improved, is a heaven upon earth, a comfortable earnest of our gathering together unto Christ at the great day. Yet observe, it is but *somewhat* filled, ἀπὸ μέγας, in part. The satisfaction we have in communion with the saints in this world, is but partial; we are but *somewhat* filled: it is partial, compared with our communion with Christ; that, and that only, will completely satisfy, that will fill the soul: It is partial, compared with the communion we hope to have with the saints in the other world. When we shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, with all the saints, and none but saints, and saints made perfect, we shall have enough of that society, and be quite filled with that company.

Thirdly, What he expected from God with them, *ver. 29.* He expected to come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ. Observe, concerning what he expected from them he speaks doubtfully, *I trust to be brought on my way, and to be filled with your company.* Paul had learnt not to be too confident of the best: These very men slipped from him afterwards, when he had occasion to use them, 2 Tim. iv. 16. *At my first answer, no man stood by me; none of the Christians at Rome: The Lord teach us to cease from man.* But concerning what he expected from God, he speaks confidently: It was uncertain whether he should come or no, but *I am sure when I do come, I shall come in the fulness, &c.* We cannot expect too little from man, nor too much from God. Now Paul expected, that God would bring him to them, loaded with blessings, so that he should be an instrument of doing a deal of good among them, and fill them with the blessings of the gospel. Compare chap. i. 11. *That I may impart unto you some spiritual gift.* The blessing of the gospel of Christ is the best and most desirable blessing. When Paul would raise their expectation of something great and good in his coming, he directs them to hope for the blessings of the gospel, spiritual blessings, knowledge, and grace, and comfort. 2. There is then a happy meeting between people and ministers, when they are both under the fulness of the blessing. The blessing of the gospel is the treasure, which we have in earthen vessels. When ministers are fully prepared to give out, and people fully prepared to receive this blessing, both are happy. Many have the gospel, that have not the blessing of the gospel, and so they have it in vain. The gospel will not profit, unless God bless it to us; and it is our duty to wait upon him for that blessing, and for the fulness of it.

3. He gives them a good reason, why he could not come and see them now; because he had other business upon his hands which required his attendance, upon which he must first make a journey to Jerusalem, *ver. 25, 26, 27, 28.* He gives a particular account of it, to shew that the excuse was real. He was going to Jerusalem, as the messenger of the church's charity to the poor saints there. Observe what he saith,

First, Concerning this charity itself. And he speaks of that upon this occasion, probably to excite the Roman Christians to do the like, according to their ability. Examples are moving, and Paul was very ingenious at begging, not for himself but for others. Observe,

(1.) For whom it was intended, *for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem, ver. 26.* It is no strange thing for saints to be poor. Those whom God favours, many times the world frowns upon; therefore riches are not the best things, nor poverty a curse.

It seems the saints at Jerusalem were poorer than other saints; either because the wealth of that people in general was now declining, as their utter ruin was hastening on; and to be sure if any must be kept poor, the saints must; or, because the famine that was over all the world in the days of Claudius Cæsar, did in a special manner prevail in Judea, a dry country; and God having called the poor of this world, the Christians smarted most by it: This was the occasion of that contribution mentioned Acts xi. 28, 29, 30. Or, because the saints at Jerusalem suffered most by persecution; for of all people the unbelieving Jews were most inveterate in their rage and malice against the Christians, wrath being come upon them to the uttermost, 1 Thess. ii. 16. The Christian Hebrews are particularly noted to have their goods spoiled.

Heb. x. 34. in consideration of which this contribution was made for them. Though the saints at Jerusalem were at a great distance from them, yet they thus extended their bounty and liberality to them; to teach us, as we have ability, and as there is occasion, to stretch out the hand of our charity to all that are of the household of faith, though in places distant from us. Though in personal instances of poverty, every church should take care to maintain their own poor, for such poor we have always with us; yet sometimes, when more public instances of poverty are presented as objects of our charity, though a great way off from us, we must extend our bounty, as the sun his beams; and with the virtuous woman, stretch out our hands to the poor, and reach our hands to the needy, Prov. xxxi. 20.

(2.) By whom it was collected, *by them of Macedonia,* (the chief of whom were the Philippians) and Achaia, the chief of whom were the Corinthians, two flourishing churches, though yet in their infancy, newly converted to Christianity. And I wish the observation did not hold, that people were commonly more liberal at their first acquaintance with the gospel, than they are afterwards; that as well as other instances of the first love, and the love of the espousals, being apt to cool and decay after a while.

It seems, they of Macedonia and Achaia were rich and wealthy, while they at Jerusalem were poor and needy; infinite wisdom ordering it so, that some should have what others want, and so this mutual dependence of Christians one upon another may be maintained.

It pleaseth them: This intimates how ready they were to it; they were not pressed or constrained to it, but they did it of their own accord; and how chearful they were in it, they took a pleasure in doing good; and God loves a chearful giver.

To make a certain contribution; κοινωνίαν τινα, a communication; in token of the communion of saints, and their fellowship, membership, as in the natural body one member communicates to the relief, and succour, and preservation of another, as there is occasion. Every thing that passeth between Christians, should be a proof and instance of that common union which they have one with another in Jesus Christ.

Time was, when the saints at Jerusalem were on the giving hand; and very liberal they were, when they laid their estates at the apostles feet for charitable uses, and took special care that the Grecian widows should not be neglected in the daily ministration, Acts vi. 1. And now the providence of God had turned the scale, and made them necessitous, they found the Grecians kind to them; for the merciful shall obtain mercy. We should therefore give a portion to seven, and also to eight, because we know not what evil may be on the earth, which may make us glad to be beholden to others.

(3.) What reason there was for it, *ver. 27. And their debtors they are.* Alms are called *righteousness*, Psal. cxii. 9. Being but stewards of what we have, we owe it there where our great Master (by the calls of providence, concurring with the precepts of the word) orders us to dispose of it: But here there was a special debt owing; the Gentiles were greatly beholden to the Jews, and were bound in gratitude to be very kind to them. From the stock of Israel came Christ himself according to the flesh, who is the light to lighten the Gentiles; out of the same stock came the prophets and apostles, and first preachers of the gospel. The Jews having had the lively oracles committed to them, were the Christians library-keepers; out of Sion went forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem; their political church-state was dissolved, and they were cut off, that the Gentiles might be admitted in. Thus did the Gentiles partake of their spiritual things, and did receive the gospel of salvation as it were at second-hand from the Jews; and therefore *their duty is*, they are bound in gratitude, to minister unto them in carnal things: It is the least they can do: λειτουργῆσαι, to minister as unto God in holy things; so the word signifies. A conscientious regard to God in works of charity and almsgiving, makes them an acceptable service and sacrifice to God, and fruit abounding to a good account. Paul mentions this probably as the argument he had used with them to persuade them to it, and it is an argument of equal cogency to other Gentile churches.

Secondly, Concerning Paul's agency in this business. He could himself contribute nothing; silver and gold he had none, but lived upon the kindness of his friends; yet he ministered unto the saints, *ver. 25.* by stirring up others, receiving what was gathered, and transmitting it to Jerusalem. Many good works of that kind stand at a stay for want of some one active person to lead in them, and to set the wheels a-going.

Paul's labour in this work is not to be interpreted as any neglect of his preaching-work; nor did Paul leave the word of God to serve tables; for besides that, Paul had other business in this journey, to visit and confirm the churches, and took this by the by; this was indeed a part of the trust committed to him, in which he was concerned to approve himself faithful, Gal. ii. 10. *They would that we should remember the poor.* Paul was one that laid out himself to do good every way, like his Master, to the bodies as well as the souls of people. Ministering to the saints is good work, and is not below the greatest apostles.

This Paul had undertaken, and therefore he resolves to go through with it, before he fell upon other work, *ver. 38. When I have sealed to them this fruit.* He calls the alms fruit, for it is one of the fruits of righteousness; it sprung from the root of grace in the givers, and redounded to the benefit and comfort of the receivers. And his sealing of it intimates his great care about it, that what was given might be kept entire, and not embezzelled, but disposed of according to the design of the givers. Paul was very solicitous to approve himself faithful in the management of this matter: An excellent pattern for ministers to write after, that the ministry may in nothing be blamed.

30. Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me: 31. That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judea; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem, may be accepted of the saints: 32. That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed. 33. Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

Here we have,

1. St. Paul's desire of a share in the prayers of the Romans for him, expressed very earnestly, *ver. 30, 31, 32.* Though Paul was a great apostle, yet he begged the prayers of the meanest Christians, not here only, but in several other of the epistles. He had prayed much for them, and this he desires as the return of his kindness. Interchanging of prayers is an excellent token of the interchanging of loves. Paul speaks like one that knew himself, and would hereby teach us, how to value the effectual fervent prayer of the righteous. How careful should we be lest, we do any thing to forfeit our interest in the love and prayers of God's praying people!

(1.) Observe why they must pray for him: He begs it with the greatest importunity. He might suspect they would forget him in their prayers, because they had no personal acquaintance with him, and therefore he urged them very closely, and begs it with the most affectionate obtestations, by all that is sacred and valuable. *I beseech you,*

First, *For the Lord Jesus Christ's sake*, q. d. He is my master, I am going about his work, and his glory is interested in the success of it: If you have any regard to Jesus Christ, and to his cause and kingdom, pray for me. You love Christ, and own Christ, for his sake then do me this kindness.

Secondly, *For the love of the Spirit.* As a proof and instance of that love, which the Spirit works in the hearts of believers one to another, pray for me; as a fruit of that communion which we have one with another by the Spirit, though we never saw one another. If ever you experienced the Spirit's love to you, and would be found returning your love to the Spirit, be not wanting in this office of kindness.

(2.) How they must pray for him; *that ye strive together.*

First, *That you strive in prayers.* Those that would prevail in prayer must strive in prayer. We must put forth all that is within us in that duty; pray with fixedness, faith, and fervency; wrestle with God, as Jacob did; pray in praying, as Elias did, *Jam. v. 17.* and stir up ourselves to take hold on God, *Isa. lxiv. 7.* And this not only when we are praying for ourselves, but when we are praying for our friends. True love to our brethren should make us as earnest for them, as sense of our own need makes it for ourselves.

Secondly, *That you strive together with me.* When he begged their prayers for him, he did not intend thereby to excuse his praying for himself; no, *strive together with me*, who am wrestling with God daily, upon my own and my friends account. He would have them to ply the same oar. Paul and these Romans were distant in place, and like to be so, and yet they might join together in prayer; those who are put far asunder by the disposal of God's providence, may yet meet together at the throne of his grace. Those who beg the prayers of others must not neglect to pray for themselves.

(3.) What they must beg of God for him. He mentions particulars; for in praying both for ourselves and for our friends, it is good to be particular. What wilt thou, that I shall do for thee? so saith Christ, when he holds out the golden scepter. Though he knows our state and wants perfectly, he will know them from us. He recommends himself to their prayers, with reference to three things.

First, His dangers which he was exposed to. *That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judea.* The unbelieving Jews were the most violent enemies Paul had, and most enraged against him, and some prospect he had of trouble from them in this journey: And therefore they must pray, that God would deliver him. We may, and must, pray against persecution. This prayer was answered in several remarkable deliverances of Paul, recorded *Acts xxi, xxii, xxiii, xxiv.*

Secondly, His services. Pray, *that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints.* Why, was there any dan-

ger that it would not be accepted? Can money be otherwise than acceptable to the poor? Yes, there was some ground of suspicion in this case; for Paul was the apostle of the Gentiles, and as the unbelieving Jews looked spitefully at him, which was their wickedness, so those that believed were shy of him upon that account, which was their weakness. He doth not say let them chuse whether they will accept it or no; if they will not, it shall be better bestowed; but pray that it may be accepted. As God must be sought unto for the restraining of the ill will of our enemies, so also for the preserving and increasing of the good will of our friends; for God hath the hearts both of the one and of the other in his hands.

Thirdly, His journey to them. To engage their prayers for him, he interests them in his concerns, *ver. 32. That I may come unto you with joy.* If his present journey to Jerusalem proved unsuccessful, his intended journey to Rome would be uncomfortable: If he should not do good, and prosper in one visit, he thought he should have small joy of the next. *May come with joy, by the will of God.* All our joy depends upon the will of God. The comfort of the creature is in every thing according to the disposal of the Creator.

2. Here is another prayer of the apostle for them, *ver. 33. Now the God of peace be with you all, Amen.* The Lord of hosts, the God of battle, is the God of peace, the author and lover of peace. He describes God under this title here, because of the divisions among them, to recommend peace to them; if God be the God of peace, let us be men of peace. The Old Testament blessing was, *Peace be with you*; now, *The God of peace be with you.* They who have the fountain, cannot want any of the streams. *With you all*; both weak and strong. To dispose them to a nearer union, he puts them all together in this prayer. Those who are united in the blessing of God, should be united in affection one to another.

CHAP. XVI.

Paul is now concluding this long and excellent epistle, and he doth it with a great deal of affection. As in the main body of the epistle he appears to have been a very knowing man, so in these appurtenances of it he appears to have been a very loving man: So much knowledge, and so much love, is a very rare, but (where it is) a very excellent and amiable composition; for what is heaven, but knowledge and love made perfect? It is observable, how often Paul speaks as if he were concluding, and yet takes fresh hold again: One would have thought that solemn benediction which closed the foregoing chapter should have ended the epistle; and yet here he begins again, and in this chapter he repeats the blessing, *ver. 20.* The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you, Amen: And yet he hath something more to say; nay, again he repeats the blessing, *ver. 24.* and yet hath not done; an expression of his tender love. These repeated benedictions, which stand for valedictions, speak Paul both to part.

Now in this closing chapter we may observe,

1. His recommendation of one friend to the Roman Christians, and his particular salutation of several among them, *ver. 1—16.*
2. A caution to take heed of those who caused divisions, *ver. 17—20.*
3. Salutations added from some who were with Paul, *ver. 21—24.*
4. He concludes with a solemn celebration of the glory of God, *ver. 25—27.*

1. I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea:
2. That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also.
3. Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus:
4. (Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles)
5. Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Salute my well beloved Eponetus, who is the first fruits of Achaia unto Christ.
6. Greet Mary, who bestowed much labour on us.
7. Salute Andronicus and Junia my kinsmen and my fellow-prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.
8. Greet Amplias my beloved in the Lord.
9. Salute Urbane our helper in Christ, and Stachys my beloved.
10. Salute Apelles approved in Christ. Salute them which are of Aristobulus household.
11. Salute Herodion my kinsman. Greet them that be of the household of Narcissus, which are in the Lord.
12. Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labour in the Lord. Salute the beloved Persis, which laboured much

much in the Lord. 13. Salute Rufus chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine. 14. Salute Asyncretus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren which are with them. 15. Salute Philologus, and Julia, Nereus, and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints which are with them. 16. Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you.

Such remembrances as these are usual in letters between friends; and yet Paul, by the favouriness of his expressions, sanctifies these common compliments.

1. Here is the recommendation of a friend, by whom (as some think) this epistle was sent, one *Phebe*, ver. 1, 2. It should seem, that she was a person of quality and estate, who had business which called her to Rome, where she was a stranger; and therefore Paul recommends her to the acquaintance of the Christians there: An expression of his true friendship to her. Paul was as well skilled in the art of obliging, as most men. True religion rightly received never made any man uncivil: Courtesy and Christianity agree well together. It was not in compliment to her, but in sincerity, that

(1.) He gives a very good character of her.

First, As a sister to Paul, *Phebe our sister*: Not in nature, but in grace; not in affinity or consanguinity, but in pure Christianity: His own sister in the faith of Christ; loving Paul, and beloved of him, with a pure and chaste, and spiritual love, as a sister; for there is neither male nor female, but all are one in Christ Jesus, *Gal. iii. 28*. Both Christ and his apostles had some of their best friends among the *devout* (and upon that account *honourable*) women.

Secondly, As a *servant to the church at Cenchrea*; *διδάσκων*, a servant by office, a stated servant, not to preach the word; that was forbidden to women; but in acts of charity and hospitality. Some think she was one of the widows that ministered to the sick, and were taken into the church's number, *1 Tim. v. 9*. But those were old and poor, whereas Phebe seems to have been a person of some account; and yet it was no disparagement to her to be a servant to the church. Probably they used to meet at her house, and she undertook the care of entertaining the ministers, especially strangers. Every one in their place should strive to *serve* the church, for therein they serve Christ, and it will turn to a good account another day. Cenchrea was a small sea-port town adjoining to Corinth, about twelve furlongs distant. Some think there was a church there distinct from that at Corinth; though being so near, it is very probable, that the church of Corinth is called the church at Cenchrea, because their place of meeting might be there, because of the great opposition to them in the city, *Acts xviii. 12*. As at Philippi they met out of the city by the water-side, *Acts xvi. 13*. So the reformed church of Paris might be called the church at Charenton, where they formerly met out of the city.

Thirdly, As a *succourer of many*, and particularly of Paul, ver. 2. She relieved many that were in want and distress. A good copy for women to write after, that have ability. She was kind to those that needed kindness, intimated in her *succouring* of them; and her bounty was extensive, she was a succourer of many. Observe the gratitude of Paul in mentioning her particular kindness to him; *and to myself also*. Acknowledgment of favours is the least return we can make: It was much to her honour, that Paul left this upon record; for wherever this epistle is read, her kindness to Paul is told for a memorial of her.

(2.) He recommends her to their care and kindness, as one worthy to be taken notice of with peculiar respect.

First, *Receive her in the Lord*: Entertain her, bid her welcome, this pass under Paul's hand could not but recommend her to any Christian church. *Receive her in the Lord*, i. e. for the Lord's sake, receive her as a servant and friend of Christ. *As it becometh saints* to receive; who love Christ, and therefore love all that are his, for his sake: or, as *becometh saints* to be received, with love and honour, and the tenderest affection. There may be occasion sometimes to improve our interest in our friends, not only for ourselves, but for others also; *interest* being a price in the hand for doing good.

Secondly, *Assist her in whatsoever business she has need of you*. Whether she had business of trade, or law-business at the court, is not material; however, being a woman, a stranger, a Christian, she had need of help; and Paul engaged them to be assistant to her. It becomes Christians to be helpful one to another in their affairs, especially to be helpful to strangers: For we are members one of another; and we know not what need of help we may have ourselves. Observe, Paul bespeaks help for one that had been so helpful to many; he that watereth, shall be watered also himself.

2. Here are commendations to some particular friends among those to whom he wrote, more than in any other of the epistles. Though the care of all the churches came upon Paul daily, enough to distract an ordinary head; yet he could retain the remembrance of so many: and his heart was so full of love and affection, as to send salutations to each of them, with particular characters of

them, and expressions of love to them, and concern for them. *Greet* them, *salute* them; it is the same word, *ἀσπάζεσθαι*. Let them know, that I remember them, and love them, and wish them well. There is something observable in divers of these salutations.

1. Concerning Aquila and Priscilla, a famous couple, that Paul had a special kindness for. They were originally of Rome, but were banished thence by the edict of Claudius, *Acts xviii. 2*. At Corinth, Paul became acquainted with them, wrought with them at the trade of tent-making; after some time, when the edge of that edict was rebated, they returned to Rome, and thither he now sends commendations to them. He calls them his *helpers in Christ Jesus*; by private instructions and converse, furthering the success of Paul's publick preaching; one instance whereof we have in their instructing of Apollos, *Acts xviii. 26*. Those are helpers to faithful ministers, that lay out themselves in their families, and among their neighbours, to do good to souls. Nay, they did not only do much, but they ventured much for Paul; they have *for my life laid down their own necks*. They exposed themselves to secure Paul, hazarded their own lives for the preservation of his, considering how much better they might be spared than he. Paul was in a great deal of danger at Corinth, while he sojourned with them; but they sheltered him, though they thereby made themselves obnoxious to the enraged multitude, *Acts xviii. 12, 17*. It was a good while ago, that they had done Paul this kindness; and yet he speaks as sensibly of it as if it had been but yesterday. *To whom* (saith he) *not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles*; who were all beholden to these good people for helping to save the life of him that was the apostle of the Gentiles. Paul mentions this to engage the Christians at Rome to be the more kind to Aquila and Priscilla.

He sends greeting likewise to the *church in their house*, ver. 5. It seems then, a church in a house is no such absurd thing, as some make it to be. Perhaps there was a congregation of Christians, that used to meet at their house at stated times; and then no doubt but it was like the house of Obed-Edom, blessed for the ark's sake. Others think, the church was no more than a religious, pious, well-governed family, that kept up the worship of God: Religion in the power of it reigning in a family, will turn a house into a church. And doubtless it had a good influence upon this, that Priscilla the good wife of the family was so very eminent and forward in religion; so eminent that she is often named first. A virtuous woman, that looks well to the ways of her household, may do much towards the advancement of religion in a family. When Priscilla and Aquila were at Ephesus, though but sojourners there, yet there also they had a *church in their house*, *1 Cor. xvi. 19*. A truly godly man will be careful to take religion along with him, wherever he goes. When Abraham removed his tent, he renewed his altar, *Gen. xiii. ult.*

2. Concerning Epenetus, ver. 5. He calls him his *well beloved*. Where the law of love is in the heart, the law of kindness will be in the tongue. Endearing language should pass among Christians, to express love, and to engage love. So he calls Amplias beloved in the Lord, with true Christian love for Christ's sake; and Stachys his *beloved*. A sign Paul had been in the third heaven, he was so much made up of love.

Of Epenetus it is further said, that he was the *first-fruits of Achaia unto Christ*: Not only one of the most eminent believers in that country, but one of the first that was converted to the faith of Christ; one that was offered up to God by Paul, as the first-fruits of his ministry there; an earnest of a great harvest, for in Corinth, the chief city of Achaia, God had much people, *Acts xviii. 10*. Special respect is to be paid to those that set out early, and come to work in the vineyard at the first hour, at the first call. The *household of Stephanas* is likewise said to be the *first-fruits of Achaia*, *1 Cor. xvi. 15*. Perhaps Epenetus was one of that household; or, however, he was one of the *first three*; not the first alone, but one, of the first fleece of Christians, that the region of Achaia afforded.

3. Concerning Mary, and some others who were laborious in that which is good; industrious Christians, Mary, who *bestowed much labour on us*. True love never sticks at labour, but rather takes a pleasure in it; where there is much love, there will be much labour. Some think this Mary had been at some of those places where Paul was, though now removed to Rome, and had personally ministered to him; others think Paul speaks of her labour as bestowed upon him, because it was bestowed upon his friends and fellow-labourers, and he took what was done to them as done to himself. He saith of Tryphena and Tryphosa, two useful women in their places, that *they labour in the Lord*, ver. 12. and of the *beloved Persis*, another good woman, that *she laboured much in the Lord*, more than others did. Among useful people, some are more useful than others; abounding more in the work of the Lord.

4. Concerning Andronicus and Junia, ver. 7. Some take them for a man and his wife, and the original will well enough bear it; and considering the name of the latter, that is more probable, than that they should be two men, as others think, and brethren. Observe,

(1.) They were Paul's *cousins*, akin to him; so was Herodion, ver. 11. Religion doth not take away, but rectifies, sanctifies, and

and improves our respect to our kindred; engaging us to lay out ourselves most for their good, and to rejoice in them the more, when we find them related to Christ by faith.

(2.) They were his *fellow-prisoners*. Partnership in suffering sometimes doth much towards the union of souls, and the knitting of affections. We do not find in the story of the Acts any imprisonment of Paul before the writing of this epistle, but that at Philippi, *Acts* xvi. 23. But Paul was in *prisons more frequent*, *2 Cor.* xi. 23. in some of which it seems he met with his friends Andronicus and Junia; yoke-fellows, as in other things, so in suffering for Christ, and bearing his yoke.

(3.) They were of *note among the apostles*: Not so much, because perhaps they were persons of estate and quality in the world, as because they were eminent for knowledge and gifts, and graces, which made them famous among the apostles, who were competent judges of those things, and were endued with a spirit of discerning not only the sincerity, but the eminency of Christians.

(4.) *Which also were in Christ before me*, i. e. were converted to the Christian faith. In time they had got the start of Paul, though he was converted the next year after Christ's ascension. How ready was Paul to acknowledge in others any kind of pre-cedency!

5. Concerning Apelles, who is here said to be *approved in Christ*, ver. 10. a high character! he was one of known integrity and sincerity in his religion, one that had been tried, his friends and enemies had tried him, and he was as gold. He was of approved knowledge and judgment, approved courage and constancy; a man that one might trust, and repose a confidence in.

6. Concerning Aristobulus and Narcissus; notice is taken of their *household*, ver. 10, 11. Those of their household which *are in the Lord*, as it is limited, ver. 11. that were Christians. How studious was Paul to leave none out of his salutations, that he had any knowledge of, or acquaintance with! Aristobulus and Narcissus themselves, some think, were absent, or lately dead; others think they were unbelievers, and such as did not themselves embrace Christianity; so Pareus: and some think this Narcissus was the same with one of that name, who is frequently mentioned in the life of Claudius, as a very rich man that had a great family, but very wicked and mischievous. It seems then there were some good servants, or other retainers, even in the family of a wicked man; a common case, *1 Tim.* vi. 1. compare ver. 2. The poor servant called and chosen, and faithful, while the rich master was passed by, and left to perish in unbelief: Even so, Father, because it seemed good unto thee.

7. Concerning Rufus, ver. 13. *chosen in the Lord*. He was a choice Christian, whose gifts and graces did evidence, that he was eternally chosen in Christ Jesus. He was one of a thousand for integrity and holiness. *And his mother and mine*; his mother by nature, and mine by Christian love, and spiritual affection; as he calls Phoebe his sister, and teacheth Timothy to treat the elder women as mothers, *1 Tim.* v. 2. This good woman upon some occasion or other had been as a mother to Paul, in caring for him, and comforting of him, and Paul here gratefully owns it, and calls her mother.

8. Concerning the rest this is observable, that he salutes the *brethren which are with them*, ver. 14. and the *saints which are with them*, ver. 15. with them in family-relations, with them in the bond of Christian communion. It is the good property of saints to delight in being together; and Paul thus joins them together in his salutations to endear them one to another. Left any should find themselves aggrieved, as if Paul had forgotten them, he concludes with the remembrance of the rest, as *brethren and saints*, though not named. In Christian congregations there should be lesser societies linked together in love and converse, and taking opportunities of being often together. Among all these to whom Paul sends greeting, here is not a word of Peter; which gives occasion to suspect that he was not bishop of Rome, as the Papists say he was; for if he was, we cannot but suppose him resident; or however, how could Paul write so long an epistle to the Christians there, and take no notice of him?

Lastly, He concludes with the recommendation of them to the love and embraces one of another. *Salute one another with a holy kiss*. Mutual salutations, as they express love, so they increase and strengthen love, and endear Christians one to another: Therefore Paul doth here encourage the use of them, and only directs that they be *holy*: A chaste kiss, in opposition to that which is wanton and lascivious: A sincere kiss, in opposition to that which is treacherous and dissembling, as Judas's, when he betrayed Christ with a kiss. He adds in the close a general salutation to them all in the name of the churches of Christ, ver. 16. *The churches of Christ salute you*, i. e. the churches which I am with, and which I am used to visit personally, as knit together in the bonds of the common Christianity, desire me to testify their affection to you, and good wishes for you. This is one way of maintaining the communion of saints.

17. Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine
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which ye have learned; and avoid them. 18. For they that are such, serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple. 19. For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil. 20. And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

The apostle having endeavoured by his endearing salutations to unite them together, it was not improper to subjoin a caution to take heed of those, whose principles and practices were destructive to Christian love. And we may observe,

1. The caution itself, which is given in the most obliging manner that could be, *I beseech you, brethren*. He doth not will and command, as one that lorded it over God's heritage, but, for love's sake, beseeches. How earnest, how endearing, are Paul's exhortations! He teaches them,

(1.) To see their danger. *Mark them which cause divisions and offences*. Our Master had himself foretold, that divisions and offences would come; but had entailed a wo on those by whom they come, *Matt.* xviii. 7. and against such we are here cautioned. Those who burden the church with dividing and offending impositions, who uphold and enforce those impositions, who introduce and propagate dividing and offending notions which are erroneous or justly suspected, who out of pride, ambition, affectation of novelty, or the like, causelessly separate from their brethren, and by perverse disputes, censures, and evil surmisings, alienate the affections of Christians one from another; these *cause divisions and offences*, contrary to, or different from, (for that also is implied, it is *παρά τὴν διδασχίαν*) the *doctrine which we have learned*. Whatever varies from the form of sound doctrine which we have in the scriptures, opens a door to divisions and offences. If truth be once deserted, unity and peace will not last long.

Now, *mark* those that thus cause divisions; *σκοπεῖν*. Observe them, the method they take, the end they drive at; there is need of a piercing, watchful eye to discern the danger we are in from such people: For commonly the pretences are plausible, when the projects are very pernicious. Do not look only at the *divisions and offences*; but run up those streams to the fountain, and mark those that *cause* them; and especially that in them which doth cause these divisions and offences; those lusts on each side, from whence come these wars and fightings. A danger discovered is half prevented.

(2.) To shun it: *and avoid them*. Shun all unnecessary communion and communication with them, lest you be leavened and infected by them. Do not strike in with any dividing interests, nor embrace any of those principles or practices which are destructive to Christian love and charity, or to the truth which is according to godliness. Their word will eat as doth a canker. Some think he doth especially warn them to take heed of the Judaizing teachers, who under the covert of the Christian name, kept up the Mosaiical ceremonies, and preached the necessity of them; who were industrious in all places to draw disciples after them, and whom Paul in most of his epistles cautions the churches to take heed of.

2. The reasons to enforce this caution.

(1.) Because of the pernicious policy of these seducers, ver. 18. The worse they are, the more need we have to watch against them. Now, observe his description of them in two things.

First, The master they serve: Not *our Lord Jesus Christ*; though they call themselves Christians, they do not serve Christ; do not aim at his glory, promote his interest, or do his will, whatever they pretend. How many are there, who call Christ Master and Lord, that are far from serving him? But they *serve their own belly*, i. e. their carnal, sensual, secular interests; it is some base lust or other that they are pleasing; pride, ambition, covetousness, luxury, lasciviousness, these are the designs which they are really carrying on: Their *God is their belly*, Phil. iii. 19. What a base master do they serve, and how unworthy to come in competition with Christ, that serve their own bellies; that make gain their godliness, and the gratifying of a sensitive appetite the very scope and business of their lives, to which all other purposes and designs must truckle and be made subservient.

Secondly, The method they take to compass their design. *By good words and fair speeches they deceive the hearts of the simple*. Their words and speeches have a shew of holiness and zeal for God; it is an easy thing to be godly from the teeth outward: and a shew of kindness and love to those, into whom they instil their corrupt doctrines, speaking them fair when they intend them the greatest mischief. Thus by *good words and fair speeches* the serpent beguiled Eve. Observe, they corrupt their heads, by *deceiving their hearts*; pervert their judgments by a sly insinuating of themselves into their affections. We have great need therefore to keep our *hearts* with all diligence, especially when seducing spirits are abroad.

(2.) Because of the peril we are in, through our proneness and aptness to be inveigled and ensnared by them : for *your obedience is come abroad unto all men* ; you are noted in all the churches for a willing, tractable, complying people. And,

First, Therefore, because it was so, these seducing teachers would be the more apt to assault them : The devil and his agents have a particular spite at flourishing churches and flourishing souls. The ship that is known to be richly laden, is most exposed to privateers ; the adversary and enemy covets such a prey, therefore look to yourselves, 2 *John* ver. 8. The false teachers hear that you are an obedient people, and therefore they will be likely to come among you, to see if you will be obedient to them. It hath been the common policy of seducers, to set upon those who are softened by convictions, and begin to enquire what they shall do, because such do most easily receive the impressions of their opinions. Sad experience witnesseth, how many who have begun to ask the way to Sion, with their faces thitherward, have fatally split upon this rock : Which speaks it much the duty of ministers, with a double care, to feed the lambs of the flock, to lay a good foundation, and gently to lead those that are with young.

Secondly, Though it were so, yet they were in danger from these seducers. This Paul suggests with a great deal of modesty and tendernefs ; not as one suspicious of them, but as one solicitous for them. Your *obedience is come abroad unto all men* ; we grant that, and rejoice in it, *I am glad therefore on your behalf*. Thus doth he insinuate their commendation, the better to make way for the caution. A holy jealousy of our friends may very well consist with a holy joy in them. You think yourselves a very happy people, and so do I too ; but for all that, you must not be secure ; *I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil*. You are a willing good-natured people, but you had best take heed of being imposed upon by those seducers. A pliable temper is good, when it is under good conduct ; but otherwise it may be very ensnaring ; and therefore he gives two general rules.

(1.) To be *wise unto that which is good*, i. e. to be skilful and intelligent in the truths and ways of God. Be wise to try the spirits, to prove all things, and then to hold fast that only which is good. There is need of a great deal of wisdom in our adherence to good truths, and good duties, and good people, lest in any of these we be imposed upon, and deluded. *Be ye therefore wise as serpents*, Matt. x. 16. wise to discern that which is really good from that which is counterfeit ; wise to distinguish things that differ, to improve opportunities. While we are in the midst of so many deceivers, we have great need of that wisdom of the prudent, which is to understand his way, *Prov.* xiv. 8.

(2.) To be *simple concerning evil* ; so wise as not to be deceived, and yet so simple as not to be deceivers. It is a holy simplicity, not to be able to contrive, or palliate, or carry on any evil design ; ἀκεραίῃς, harmless, unmixed, inoffensive. *In malice be ye children*, 1 *Cor.* xiv. 20. The wisdom of the serpent becomes Christians, but not the subtilty of the old serpent. We must withal be *harmless as doves*. That is a wisely simple man, that knows not how to do any thing against the truth.

Now, Paul was the more solicitous for the Roman church, that that might keep its integrity, because it was so famous ; it was a city upon a hill, and many eyes were upon the Christians there, so that an error prevailing there would be a bad precedent, and have an ill influence upon other churches. As indeed it hath since proved in fact ; the great apostasy of the latter days taking its rise from that capital city. The errors of leading churches, are leading errors. When the bishop of Rome fell as a *great star* from heaven, *Rev.* viii. 10. *His tail drew a third part of the stars* after him, *Rev.* xii. 4.

(3.) Because of the promises of God, that we should have victory at last ; which is given to quicken and encourage, not to supersede our watchful cares and vigorous endeavours. It is a very sweet promise, *ver.* 20. *The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet*.

1. The titles he gives to God ; *the God of peace*, i. e. the author and giver of all good. When we come to God for spiritual victories, we must not only eye him as the Lord of hosts, whose all power is, but as the God of peace, a God at peace with us, speaking peace to us, working peace in us, creating peace for us. Victory comes from God more as the God of peace, than as the God of war ; for in all our conflicts, peace is the thing we must contend for. God, as the God of peace, will restrain and vanquish all those that cause divisions and offences, and so break and disturb the peace of the church.

2. The blessing he expects from God ; a victory over Satan. If he mean primarily those false doctrines and seducing spirits spoken of before, of which Satan was the prime founder and author, yet doubtless it comprehends all the other designs and devices of Satan against souls, to defile, disturb, and destroy them ; all his attempts to keep us from the purity of heaven, the peace of heaven here, and the possession of heaven hereafter. Satan tempting and troubling, acting as a deceiver and as a destroyer, the *God of peace* will bruise under our feet. He had cautioned them before against simplicity : Now they being conscious of their own great weakness and folly, might think, how shall we wade and escape these snares that are laid for us ? Will not these adversaries of our

souls be at length too hard for us ? No, saith he, fear not ; though you cannot overcome in your own strength and wisdom, yet the God of peace will do it for you ; and through him that loved us, we shall be more than conquerors.

First, The victory shall be complete. *He shall bruise Satan under your feet* ; plainly alluding to the first promise of the Messiah, made in paradise, *Gen.* iii. 15. that the seed of the woman should break the serpent's head ; which is in the fulfilling every day, while the saints are enabled to resist and overcome the temptations of Satan ; and will be perfectly fulfilled, when, in spite of all the powers of darkness, all that belong to the election of grace shall be brought triumphantly to glory. When Joshua had conquered the kings of Canaan, he called the captains of Israel to set their feet upon the necks of those kings, *Jos.* x. 24. so will Christ, our Joshua, enable all his faithful servants and soldiers to set their feet upon Satan's neck, to trample upon, and triumph over their spiritual enemies. Christ hath overcome for us, disarmed the strong man armed, broken his power, and we have nothing to do but to pursue the victory, and divide the spoil. Let this quicken us to our spiritual conflict, to fight the good fight of faith ; we have to do with a conquered enemy, and the victory will be perfect shortly.

Secondly, The victory shall be speedy : He shall do it *shortly*. Yet a little while, and he that shall come, will come. He hath said it, *Behold, I come quickly*. When Satan seems to have prevailed, and we are ready to give up all for gone, then will the God of peace cut the work short in righteousness. It will encourage soldiers, when they know the war will be at an end quickly, in such a victory. Some refer it to the happy period of their contentions, in true love and unity ; others to the period of the church's persecutions, in the conversion of the powers of the empire to Christianity, when the bloody enemies of the church were subdued and trampled on by Constantine, and the church under his government. It is rather to be applied to the victory, which all the saints shall have over Satan, when they come to heaven, and shall be for ever out of his reach ; together with the present victories which through grace they obtain in earnest of that. Hold out therefore, faith and patience, yet a little while ; when we are once got through the Red-sea, we shall see our spiritual enemies dead on the shore, and triumphantly sing the song of Moses, and the song of the Lamb.

To this therefore he subjoins the benediction, *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you*. The good will of Christ towards you, the good work of Christ in you. This will be the best preservative against the snares of hereticks and schismatics, and false teachers. If the grace of Christ be with us, who can be against us, so as to prevail ? Be strong therefore in the grace which is in Christ Jesus. Paul, not only as a friend, but as a minister and an apostle, who had received grace for grace, thus with authority blest them with this blessing, and repeats it, *ver.* 24.

21. Timotheus my work-fellow, and Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipater, my kinsmen salute you. 22. I Tertius, who wrote *this* epistle, salute you in the Lord. 23. Gaius mine host, and of the whole church, saluteth you. Erastus the chamberlain of the city saluteth you. and Quartus a brother. 24. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

As the apostle had before sent his own salutations to many of this church, and that of the churches round him to them all ; he here adds an affectionate remembrance of them from some particular persons, who were now with him, the better to promote acquaintance and fellowship among distant saints ; and that the subscribing of these worthy names, known to them, might the more recommend this epistle. He mentions,

1. Some that were his particular friends, and probably known to the Roman Christians ; *Timotheus my work-fellow*. Paul sometimes calls Timothy his son, as an inferior ; but here he styles him his work-fellow, as one equal with him ; such a respect doth he put upon him : and Lucius, probably Lucius of Cyrene, a noted man in the church of Antioch, *Acts* xiii. 1. as Jason was at Thessalonica, where he suffered for entertaining Paul, *Acts* xvii. 5, 6. and Sosipater, supposed to be the same with *Sopater of Berea*, mentioned *Acts* xx. 4. These last Paul calls his *kinsmen* ; not only more largely, as they were Jews, but as they were in blood or affinity nearly allied to him. It seems Paul was of a good family, that he met with so many of his kindred in several places. It is a very great comfort to see the holiness and usefulness of our kindred.

2. One that was Paul's amanuensis. *Ver.* 22. *I Tertius, who wrote this epistle*. Paul made use of a scribe, not out of state, or idleness, but because he wrote a bad hand, which was not very legible, which he excuseth, when he wrote to the Galatians with his own hand, *Gal.* vi. 11. *ἡλικίους γράμμασιν*, with what kind of letters. Perhaps this Tertius was the same with Silas ; for Silas (as some think) signifies *the third* in Hebrew, as *Tertius* in Latin. Tertius either wrote as Paul dictated, or transcribed it fair over out of Paul's foul copy. The least piece of service done to the church, and the ministers of the church, shall not pass without

without a remembrance and a recompence. It was an honour to Tertius, that he had a hand, though but as a scribe, in writing this epistle.

3. Some others that were of note among the Christians, *ver. 23.* *Gaius mine host.* It is uncertain, whether this was Gaius of Derbe, *Acts xx. 4.* or Gaius of Macedonia, *Acts xix. 29.* or rather Gaius of Corinth, *1 Cor. i. 14.* and whether any of these was he to whom John wrote his third epistle. However, Paul commends him for his great hospitality; not only *mine host*, but of the *whole church*; one that entertained them all, as there was occasion, opened his doors to their church-meetings, and eased the rest of the church by his readiness to treat all Christian strangers that came to them.

Erastus, the chamberlain of the city, is another; he means of the city of Corinth, whence this epistle was dated. It seems he was a person of honour and account, one in publick place, steward or treasurer: Not many mighty, not many noble are called, but some are. His estate, and honour, and employment, did not take him off from attending on Paul, and laying out himself for the good of the church, it should seem, in the work of the ministry; for he is joined with Timothy, *Acts xix. 22.* and is mentioned *2 Tim. iv. 20.* No disparagement to the chamberlain of the city to be a preacher of the gospel of Christ. Quartus is likewise mentioned, and called a *brother*; for as one is our Father, even Christ, so all we are brethren.

25. Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, (according to the revelation of thy mystery which was kept secret since the world began, 26. But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith) 27. To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.

Here the apostle solemnly closes his epistle with a magnificent ascription of glory to the blessed God, as one that terminated all in the praise and glory of God, and studied to return all to him, seeing all is of him, and from him. He doth, as it were, breathe out his soul to these Romans in the praise of God, chusing to make that the end of his epistle, which he made the end of his life. Observe here,

1. A description of the gospel of God, which comes in in a parenthesis; having occasion to speak of it, as the *means* by which the power of God stablisheth souls, and the *rule* of that establishment. *To stablish you according to my gospel.* Paul calls it his gospel, because he was the preacher of it, and because he did so much glory in it. Some think he means especially that declaration, explication, and application of the doctrine of the gospel, which he had now made in this epistle: But it rather takes in all the preaching and writing of the apostles, among whom Paul was a principal labourer. Through *their* word, *John xvii. 20.* the word committed to them. Ministers are the ambassadors, and the gospel is their embassy. Paul had his head and heart so full of the gospel, that he could scarce mention it without a digression to set forth the nature and excellency of it.

First, It is the *preaching of Jesus Christ*. Christ was the preacher of it himself; it began to be spoken by the Lord, *Heb. ii. 3.* so pleased was Christ with his undertaking for our salvation, that he would himself be the publisher of it. Or, Christ is the subject matter of it; the sum and substance of the whole gospel was *Jesus Christ*, and him crucified. We preach not ourselves, saith Paul, but *Christ Jesus the Lord*. That which stablisheth souls, is the plain preaching of Jesus Christ.

Secondly, *It is the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret since the world began, and by the scriptures of the prophets — made known.* The subject-matter of the gospel is a *mystery*; our redemption and salvation by Jesus Christ, in the foundation, method, and fruits of it, is, without controversy, a great mystery of godliness, *1 Tim. iii. 16.* This speaks the honour of the gospel; it is no vulgar common thing, hammered out by any human wit, but it is the admirable product of the eternal wisdom and counsel of God, and hath in it such an unconceivable height, such an unfathomable depth, as passeth knowledge. It is a mystery which the angels desire to look into, and cannot find the bottom of. And yet, blessed be God, there is as much of this mystery made plain, as will suffice to bring us to heaven, if we do not wilfully neglect so great salvation. Now,

(1.) This mystery was *kept secret since the world began*; *χρόνους αἰώνιους σεσχημένον*. It was *wrapped up in silence from eternity*; so some, *à temporibus æternis*; it is no new and upstart notion, no late invention, but took rise from the days of eternity, and the purposes of God's everlasting love: Before the foundation of the world was laid, this mystery was hid in God, *Eph. iii. 9.* Or, *since the world began*, so we translate it; during all the times of the Old Testament, this mystery was comparatively kept secret, in the types and shadows of the ceremonial law, and the dark predictions of the prophets, which pointed at it; but so that they could not steadfastly look to the end of those things,

2 Cor. iii. 13. Thus it was hid from ages and generations, even among the Jews; much more among the Gentiles that sat in darkness, and had no notices at all of it. Even the disciples of Christ themselves, before his resurrection and ascension, were very much in the dark about the mystery of redemption, and their notion of it was very much clouded and confused; such a secret was it for many ages. But,

(2.) It is now *made manifest*. The veil is rent, the shadows of the evening are done away, and life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel, and the sun of righteousness is risen upon the world. Paul doth not pretend to have the monopoly of this discovery, as if he alone knew it; no, it is made manifest to many others.

But how is it made manifest by the *scriptures of the prophets*? Surely, because now the event had given the best exposition to the prophecies of the Old Testament: being accomplished, they were explained. The *preaching* of the prophets, as far as it related to this mystery, was dark and unintelligible in a great measure, in the ages wherein they lived; but the scriptures of the prophets, that which they left in writing, is now not only made plain in itself, but by it this mystery is *made known* to all nations. The Old Testament doth not only borrow light from, but return light to, the revelation of the New Testament. If the New Testament explain the Old, the Old Testament, by way of requital, very much illustrates the New. Thus the Old Testament prophets *prophecy again*, now their prophecies are fulfilled, *before many people, and nations, and tongues*. I refer to *Rev. x. ult.* which this explains. Now Christ appears to have been the treasure hid in the field of the Old Testament: to him bear *all the prophets witness*. See *Luke xxiv. 27.*

(3.) It is manifested *according to the commandment of the everlasting God*, i. e. the purpose, counsel and decree of God from eternity; and the commission and appointment given first to Christ, and then to the apostles, in the fulness of time. They received *commandment from the Father*, to do what they did in preaching the gospel. Left any should object, why was this mystery kept secret so long, and why made manifest now? he resolves it into the will of God, who is an absolute sovereign, and gives not account of any of his matters. The commandment of the everlasting God was enough to bear out the apostles and ministers of the gospel in their preaching.

The everlasting God. This attribute of eternity is here given to God very emphatically. (1.) He is from everlasting; which intimates, that though he had kept this mystery secret since the world began, and had but lately revealed it, yet he had framed and contrived it from everlasting, before the worlds were. The oaths and covenants in the written word, are but the copy of that oath and covenant which was between the Father and the Son from eternity: Those the extracts, these the original. And, (2.) He is to everlasting; intimating the eternal continuance of this revelation, and its eternal consequence to us. We must never look for any new revelation, but abide by this, for this is according to the commandment of the *everlasting God*. Christ in the gospel, is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

(4.) It is *made known to all nations for the obedience of faith*. The extent of this revelation he often takes notice of; that whereas hitherto in Judah only God was known; now Christ is salvation to the ends of the earth, *to all nations*. And the design and intention of it is very observable, it is *for the obedience of faith*, i. e. that they might believe and obey it, receive it, and be ruled by it. The gospel is revealed, not to be talked of and disputed about, but to be submitted to. The *obedience of faith* is that obedience which is *paid* to the word of faith, (see that phrase, *Acts vi. 7.*) and which is *produced* by the *grace* of faith. See here what is the right *faith*, even that which works in obedience; and what is the right obedience, even that which springs from faith; and what is the design of the gospel, to bring us to both.

2. A doxology to that God, whose gospel it is; ascribing glory to him, *for ever*, *ver. ult.* acknowledging that he is a glorious God, and adoring him accordingly, with the most awful affections, desiring and longing to be at this work with the holy angels, where we shall be doing it to eternity.

This is praising God, ascribing glory to him for ever. Observe,

First, The matter of this praise. In thanking God, we fasten upon his favours to us; in praising and adoring God, we fasten upon his perfections in himself.

Two of his principal attributes are here taken notice of.

(1.) His power, *ver. 25.* *To him that is of power to stablish you.* It is no less than a divine power, that stablisheth the saints. Considering the disposition that is in them to fall, the industry of their spiritual enemies that seek to overthrow them, and the shaking times into which their lot is cast, no less than an almighty Power will stablish them.

That power of God, which is put forth for the establishment of the saints, is, and ought to be, the matter of our praise, as *Jude ver. 24.* To him that is *able to keep you from falling*. In giving God the glory of this power, we may, and must take to ourselves the comfort of it; that whatever our doubts and difficulties, and fears may be, our God, whom we serve, is of power to stablish us. See *1 Pet. i. 5.* *John x. 29.*

(2.) His

(2.) His wisdom, *ver. 27. To God only wise.* Power to effect without wisdom to contrive, and wisdom to contrive without power to effect, are alike vain and fruitless; but both together, and both infinite, make a *perfect being*. He is *only wise*; not the Father only wise, exclusive of the Son; but Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three persons, and one God, only wise, compared with the creatures: Man, the wisest of all the creatures in the lower world, is born like a wild ass's colt; nay, the angels themselves are *charged with folly*, in comparison with God. He only is perfectly and infallibly wise; he only is originally wise, in and of himself; for he is the spring and fountain of all the wisdom of the creatures; the *Father of all the lights of wisdom* that any creature can pretend to, *James i. 17.* with him is strength and wisdom, the deceived and deceiver are his.

Secondly, The Mediator of this praise; *through Jesus Christ.* To God *only wise through Jesus Christ*; so some. It is in and through Christ, that God is manifested to the world as the only wise God; for he is the wisdom of God, and the power of God. Or rather, as we read it, *glory through Jesus Christ.* All the glory that passeth from fallen man to God, so as to be accepted of him, must go through the hands of the Lord Jesus. in whom alone it is that our persons and performances are or can be pleasing to God. Of his righteousness therefore we must make mention, even of his only; who, as he is the mediator of all our prayers, so he is, and I believe will be, to eternity, the mediator of all our praises.

A N

E X P O S I T I O N

O F T H E

First Epistle of St. Paul to the CORINTHIANS,

W I T H

P R A C T I C A L O B S E R V A T I O N S.

CORINTH was a principal city of Greece, in that particular division of it which was called Achaia. It was situate on the Isthmus, (or neck of land) that joined Peloponnesus to the rest of Greece, on the southern side, and had two ports adjoining; one at the bottom of the Corinthian gulf, called Lechaum, not far from the city, from whence they traded to Italy and the west; the other, at the bottom of the Sinus Saronicus, called Cenchrea, at a more remote distance, from whence they traded to Asia. From this situation, it is no wonder that Corinth should be a place of great trade and wealth. And, as affluence is apt to produce luxury of all kinds; neither is it to be wondered, if a place so famous for wealth and arts, should be infamous for vice. It was in a particular manner noted for fornication, inasmuch that a Corinthian woman was a proverbial phrase for a common whore, and *κορινθια, κορινθια*, to play the Corinthian, is to play the whore, or indulge to whorish inclinations. Yet in this lewd city did Paul, by the blessing of God on his labours, plant and raise a Christian church, chiefly among the Gentiles, as seems very probable from the history of this matter, Acts xviii. 1—18. compared with some passages in this epistle, particularly chap. xii. ver. 2. where the apostle tells them, Ye know that ye were Gentiles carried away to those dumb idols even as ye were led. Though it is not improbable, that many Jewish converts might be also among them; for we are told, that Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord, with all his house, Acts xviii. 8. He continued in this city near two years, as is plain from Acts xviii. 11, and 18. compared, and laboured with great success, being encouraged by a divine vision, assuring him God had much people in that city, Acts xviii. 9, 10. Nor did he use to stay long in a place, where his ministry met not with acceptance and success.

Some time after he left them, he wrote this epistle to them, to water what he had planted, and rectify some gross disorders, that during his absence had been introduced, partly from the interest some false teacher or teachers had obtained amongst them, and partly from the leaven of their old maxims and manners, that had not been thoroughly purged out by the Christian principles they had entertained. And it is but too visible how much their wealth had helped to corrupt their manners, from the several faults for which the apostle reprehends them. Pride, avarice, luxury, lust, the natural offspring of a carnal and corrupt mind, are all fed and prompted by outward affluence. And with all these, either the body of this people, or some particular persons among them, are here charged by the apostle. Their pride discovered itself in their sidings and factions, and the notorious disorders they committed in the exercise of their spiritual gifts. And this vice was not wholly fed by their wealth, but by the insight they had into the Greek learning and philosophy. Some of the ancients tell us, that the city abounded with rhetoricians and philosophers. And these were men naturally vain, full of self-conceit, and apt to despise the plain doctrine of the gospel, because it did not feed the curiosity of an inquisitive and disputing temper, nor please the ear with artful speeches, and a flow of fine words. Their avarice was manifest in their law-suits and litigations about meum and tuum before heathen judges. Their luxury appeared in more instances than one, in their dress, in their debauching themselves even at the Lord's table, where the rich, who were most faulty

on this account, were guilty also of a very proud and criminal contempt of their poor brethern. Their lust broke out in a most flagrant and infamous instance, such as had not been named among the Gentiles, not spoken of without detestation, that a man should have his father's wife, either as his wife, or so as to commit fornication with her. This indeed seems to have been the fault of a particular person, but the whole church were to blame that they had his crime in no greater abhorrence, that they could endure one of such very corrupt morals, and so flagitious a behaviour amongst them. But their participation in his sin was yet greater, if, as some of the antients tell us, they were puffed up on behalf of the great learning and eloquence of this incestuous person. And it is plain from other passages of the epistle, that they were not so entirely free from their former lewd inclinations, as not to need very strict cautions, and strong arguments against fornication: see chap. vi. 9—end. The pride of their learning had also carried many of them so far, as to disbelieve or dispute against the doctrine of the resurrection. It is not improbable, that they treated this question problematically, as they did many questions in philosophy, and tried their skill by arguing it pro and con.

It is manifest from this state of things, that there was much that deserved reprehension, and needed correction, in this church. And the apostle, under the direction and influence of the holy Spirit, sets himself to do both with all wisdom and faithfulness, and with a due mixture of tenderness and authority, as became one in so elevated and important a station in the church. After a short introduction at the beginning of the epistle, he first blames them for their discord and factions, enters into the original and source of them, shews them how much pride and vanity, and the affectation of science and learning, and eloquence, flattered by false teachers, hath contributed to the scandalous schism; and prescribes humility and submission to divine instruction, the teaching of God by his Spirit, both by external revelation and internal illumination, as a remedy for the evils that abounded amongst them. He shews them the vanity of their pretended science and eloquence on many accounts. This is his business through the first four chapters. In the fifth he treats of the case of the incestuous person, and orders him to be put out from amongst them. Nor is what the antients say improbable, that this incestuous person was a man in great esteem, and head of one party at least amongst them. The apostle seems to tax them with being puffed up on his account, chap. v. 2. In the sixth chapter, he blames them for their law-suits carried on before heathen judges, when their disputes about property should have been amicably determined amongst themselves; and in the close of the chapter warns them against the sin of fornication, and urges his caution with variety of arguments. In the seventh chapter, he gives advice upon a case of conscience, which some of that church had proposed to him in an epistle, about marriage: And shews it to be appointed of God, as a remedy against fornication, that the ties of it were not dissolved, though an husband or wife continued an Heathen, when the other became a Christian; and in short, that Christianity made no change in mens civil states and relations. He gives also some directions here about virgins, in answer (as is probable) to the Corinthians enquiries. In the eighth, he directs them about meats offered to idols, and cautions them against abusing their Christian liberty. From whence he also takes occasion in the ninth chapter to expatiate a little on his own conduct upon this head of liberty. For though he might have insisted on a maintenance from the churches where he ministered, he waved this demand, that he might make the gospel of Christ without charge: And did in other things comply with, and suit himself to, the tempers and circumstances of those among whom he laboured, for their good. In the tenth chapter he dissuades them, from the example of the Jews, against having communion with idolaters, by eating of their sacrifices, inasmuch as they could not be at once partakers of the Lord's table and the table of devils; though they were not bound to enquire concerning meat sold in the shambles, or set before them at a feast made by unbelievers, whether it were a part of the idol sacrifices or no, but were at liberty to eat without asking questions. In the eleventh chapter, he gives direction about their habit in publick worship, blames them for their gross irregularities and scandalous disorders in receiving the Lord's-supper, and solemnly warns them against the abuse of so sacred an institution. In the twelfth chapter he enters on the consideration of spiritual gifts, which were poured forth in great abundance on this church, upon which they were not a little elated. He tells them in this chapter, that all came from the same original, and were all directed to same end. They issued from one Spirit, and were intended for the good of the church, and must be abused when they were not made to minister to this purpose. Towards the close he informs them, that they were indeed valuable gifts, but he could recommend to them somewhat far more excellent. Upon which he breaks out in the thirteenth chapter into the commendation and characters of charity. And then in the fourteenth directs them how to keep up decency and order in the churches, in the use of their spiritual gifts, in which they seem to have been exceeding irregular, through pride of their gifts, and a vanity of shewing them. The fifteenth chapter is taken up in confirming and explaining the great doctrine of the resurrection. The last chapter consists of some particular advices and salutations; and thus the epistle closes.

CHAP. I.

In this chapter we have, (1.) The preface or introduction to the whole epistle, ver. 1—10. (2.) One principal occasion of writing it hinted, viz. their divisions, and the original of them, ver. 10—13. (3.) An account of Paul's ministry among them, which was principally preaching the gospel, ver. 13—17. (4.) The manner wherein he preached the gospel, and the different success of it, with an account how admirably it was fitted to bring glory to God, and beat down the pride and vanity of man, ver. 17, ad fin.

No. cvii.

1. **P**AUL called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ, through the will of God, and Sothenes our brother, 2. Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours. 3. Grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. 4. I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; 5. That in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge: 6. Even as the testimony of Christ

was

was confirmed in you. 7. So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: 8. Who shall also confirm you unto the end, *that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.* 9. God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

We have here the apostle's preface to his whole epistle. In which we may take notice, (1.) Of the *inscription*; in which, according to the custom of writing letters then, the name of the person by whom it was written, and the persons to whom it was written, are both inserted. It is an epistle from Paul the apostle of the Gentiles to the church of Corinth, which himself had planted, though there were some among them that now questioned his apostleship, *chap. ix. 1, 2.* and vilified his person and ministry, *2 Cor. x. 10. The most faithful and useful ministers are not secure from this contempt.* He begins with challenging this character. *Paul called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ, through the will of God.* He had not taken this honour to himself, but had a divine commission for it. It was proper at any time, but necessary at this time, to assert his character and *magnify his office*; when false teachers made a merit of running him down, and their giddy and deluded followers were so apt to set them up in competition with him. *It was not pride in Paul, but faithfulness to his trust, in this juncture, to maintain his apostolical character and authority.* And to make this more fully appear, he joins Sosthenes with him in writing, who was a minister of a lower rank. Paul, and Sosthenes his brother, not a fellow-apostle, but a fellow-minister. Once a ruler of a Jewish synagogue, afterwards a convert to Christianity. A Corinthian by birth, as is most probable, and dear to this people: For which reason, Paul, to ingratiate himself with them, joins him with himself in his first salutations. Though there is no reason to suppose he was made a partaker of the apostle's inspiration; for which reason he speaks through the rest of the epistle in his own name, and in the singular number. Paul did not in any case lessen his apostolical authority, and yet he was ready upon all occasions to do a kind and condescending thing, for their good to whom he ministered. (2.) The persons to whom this epistle was directed, are *the church of God that was at Corinth, sanctified in Christ Jesus, and called to be saints.* All Christians are thus far sanctified in Christ Jesus, that they are by baptism dedicated and devoted to him, they are under strict obligations to be holy, and they make profession of real sanctity. If they be not truly holy, it is their own fault and reproach. Note, It is the design of Christianity to sanctify us in Christ. *He gave himself for us, to redeem us from all iniquity, and purify us to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.* In conjunction with the church at Corinth, he directs the epistle to *all that in every place call on the name of Christ Jesus our Lord, both theirs and ours.* Hereby Christians are distinguished from the *profane and atheistical*, that they dare not live without prayer: And hereby they are distinguished from Jews and Pagans, that they call on the name of Christ. He is their common head and Lord. Observe, That in every place in the Christian world there are some that call on the name of Christ. God hath a remnant in all places; and we should have a common concern for, and hold communion with, all that call on Christ's name.

(2.) Of the *apostolical benediction.* *Grace be to you, and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.* An apostle of the *prince of peace*, must be a messenger and minister of peace. This blessing the gospel brings with it, and this blessing every preacher of the gospel should heartily wish and pray may be the lot of all among whom he ministers. Grace and peace, the favour of God and reconciliation to him. It is indeed the summary of all blessings. *The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace,* was the form of benediction under the Old Testament, *Numb. ix. 26.* but this advantage we have by the gospel, (1.) That we are directed how to obtain that peace from God. It is in and by Christ. Sinners can have no peace with God, nor any good from him, but through Christ. (2.) We are told what must qualify us for this peace; namely, grace. First *grace*, and then *peace*. God first reconciles sinners to himself, before he bestows his peace upon them.

(3.) Of the apostle's *thanksgiving* to God on their behalf. Paul begins most of his epistles with thanksgiving to God for his friends, and prayer for them. Note, The best way of manifesting our affection to our friends, is by praying and giving thanks for them. It is one branch of the *communion of saints*, to give thanks to God mutually for our gifts, graces, and comforts. He gives thanks, (1.) For their *conversion to the faith of Christ*; *that grace was given them by Jesus Christ,* ver. 4. He is the great procurer and disposer of the favours of God. Those who are united to him by faith, and made to partake of his Spirit and merits, are the objects of divine favour. God loves them, bears them hearty good-will, and bestows on them his fatherly smiles and blessings. (2.) For the abundance of their *spiritual gifts*. This the church of Corinth was famous for. *They did not come bebind any of the churches in any gift,* ver. 7. He instances in *utterance and knowledge*, ver. 5. Where God hath given these two gifts, he hath given great capacity for usefulness. Many have the

flower of utterance, that have not the *root of knowledge*; and their converse is barren. Many have the treasure of knowledge, and want utterance to employ it for the good of others; and then it is in a manner wrapped up in a napkin. But where God gives both, a man is qualified for eminent usefulness. When the church of Corinth was *enriched with all utterance, and all knowledge*, it was fit that a large tribute of praise should be rendered to God; especially when these gifts were a testimony to the truth of the Christian doctrine, *a confirmation of the testimony of Christ among them*, ver. 6. They were *signs and wonders, and gifts of the Holy Ghost*, by which God did bear witness to the apostles, both to their mission and doctrine, *Heb. ii. 3.* So that the more plentifully they were poured forth on any church, the more full attestation was given to that doctrine which was delivered by the apostles: The more confirming evidence they had of their divine mission. And it is no wonder, that when they had such foundation for their faith, they should live in expectation of *the coming of their Lord Jesus Christ*, ver. 7. It is the character of Christians that they wait for Christ's second coming; all our religion hath regard to that: We believe it, and hope for it, and it is the business of our lives to prepare for it, if we are Christians indeed. And the more confirmed we are in the Christian faith, the more firm is our belief of our Lord's second coming, and the more earnest our expectation of it.

(4.) Of the encouraging hopes the apostle had of them for the time to come, founded on the power and love of Christ, and the faithfulness of God, ver. 8, 9. He who had begun a good work in them, and carried it on thus far, would not leave it unfinished. Those that wait for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, will be kept by him, and confirmed to the end; and those that are *kept*, will be *blameless in the day of Christ*. Not upon the foot of strict justice, but gracious abolution; not in *rigour of law*, but from rich and free grace. How desirable is it to be confirmed and kept of Christ for such a purpose as this! How glorious are the hopes of such a privilege, whether for ourselves, or others! To be kept by the power of Christ from the power of our own corruptions, and Satan's temptations, that we may appear without blame in the great day! Oh glorious expectation! especially when the faithfulness of God comes in to support our hopes. *He who hath called us into the fellowship of his Son is faithful, and will do it,* 1 Theff. v. 24. He who hath brought us into near and dear relation to Christ, into sweet and intimate communion with Christ, is faithful; he may be trusted with our dearest concerns. Those that come at his call, shall never be disappointed in their hopes in him. If we approve ourselves faithful to God, we shall never find him unfaithful to us. *He will not suffer his faithfulness to fail,* Psal. lxxxix. 33.

10. Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same things, and *that there be no divisions among you*; but *that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment.* 11. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them *which are of the house of Chloe*, that there are contentions among you. 12. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ. 13. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?

Here the apostle enters on his subject. He exhorts them to unity and brotherly love, and reproves them for their divisions. He had received an account from some that wished them well, of some unhappy differences amongst them. It was neither ill will to the church, nor to their ministers, that prompted them to give this account; but a kind and prudent concern to have these heats qualified by Paul's interposition. He writes to them in a very engaging way: *I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*, if you have any regard to that dear and worthy name by which you are called, be unanimous. *Speak all the same thing*; avoid *divisions or schisms*, as the original is; that is, all alienation of affection from each other. *Be perfectly joined together in the same mind*, viz. as far as you can. In the great things of religion be of a mind: but when there is not a unity of sentiment, let there be a union of affections. The consideration of being agreed in greater things, should extinguish all feuds and divisions about lesser ones. (2.) He hints at the original of these contentions. Pride lay at the bottom, and this made them factious. *Only of pride cometh contention*, Prov. xiii. 10. They quarrelled about their ministers. Paul and Apollos were both faithful ministers of Jesus Christ, and helpers of their faith and joy: but those who were disposed to be contentious, broke into parties, and set their ministers at the head of their several factions: some cried up Paul, perhaps as the most sublime and spiritual teacher. Others cried up Apollos, perhaps as the most eloquent speaker. Some Cephas or Peter, perhaps for the authority of his age, or because he was the apostle of the circumcision. And some were for neither, but Christ only. So liable are the best things in the world to be corrupted, and the gospel and its institutions, which

are at perfect harmony with themselves and one another, to be made the engines of variance, discord and contention. This is no reproach to our religion, but a very melancholy evidence of the corruption and pravity of human nature. Note, How far will pride carry Christians in opposition to one another! Even so far as to set Christ and his own apostles at variance, and make them rivals and competitors. (3.) He expostulates with them upon their discord and quarrels. *Is Christ divided?* No, there is but one Christ, and therefore Christians should be of one heart. *Was Paul crucified for you?* Was he your sacrifice and atonement? Did I ever pretend to be your saviour, or any more than his minister? Or, *were ye baptized in the name of Paul?* Were you devoted to my service, or engaged to be my disciples, by that sacred right? Did I challenge that right in you, or dependence from you, as are the proper claims of your God and Redeemer? No, ministers, however instrumental they are of good to us, are not to be put in Christ's stead. They are not to usurp Christ's authority, nor encourage any thing in the people that looks like transferring his authority to them. He is our Saviour and sacrifice, he is our Lord and guide. And happy were it for the churches, if there were no name of distinction among them, as *Christ is not divided*.

14. I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius: 15. Lest any should say, that I had baptized in mine own name. 16. And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other.

Here the apostle gives an account of his ministry amongst them. *He thanks God*, he had baptized but a few among them: Crispus, who had been ruler of a synagogue at Corinth, *Acts xviii. 8.* and Gaius, and the household of Stephanas; besides, he says, he did not remember he had baptized any. But how was this a proper matter for thankfulness? Was it not part of the apostolical commission to baptize all nations? And could Paul give thanks to God for his own neglect of duty? He is not to be understood in such a sense, as if he was thankful for not having baptized at all, but for not having done it in present circumstances, lest it should have had this very bad construction put upon it, that he had baptized in his *own name*, made disciples for himself, or set himself up as the *head* of a sect. He left it to other ministers to baptize, whilst he set himself to more useful work; and filled up his time with preaching the gospel. This he thought was more his business, because the more important business of the two. He had assistants that could baptize, when none could discharge the other part of his office as well as himself. In this sense he saith, *Christ sent him not to baptize, but to preach the gospel*; not so much to baptize, as to preach. Note, Ministers should esteem themselves sent and set apart more especially to that service in which Christ will be most honoured, and the salvation of souls promoted, and for which themselves are best fitted; though no part of their duty is to be neglected. The principal business Paul *did* amongst them, was to preach; to preach *the gospel*, ver. 17. *the cross*, ver. 11. *Christ crucified*, ver. 23. ministers are the soldiers of Christ, and are to erect and display the banner of the cross. He did not preach his own fancy, but the gospel; the glad tidings of peace and reconciliation to God, through the mediation of a crucified Redeemer. This is the sum and substance of the gospel. Christ crucified is the foundation of all our hopes, and the fountain of all our joys. By his death we live. This is what Paul preached, what all ministers should preach, and what all the saints live upon.

17. For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. 18. For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish, foolishness: but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God. 19. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. 20. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? 21. For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. 22. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: 23. But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks, foolishness; 24. But unto them which are called both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. 25. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. 26. For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. 27. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, to con-

found the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world, to confound the things which are mighty; 28. And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: 29. That no flesh should glory in his presence. 30. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: 31. That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

We have here, (1.) The manner in which Paul preached the gospel and the cross of Christ: *Not with the wisdom of words*, ver. 17. *the enticing words of man's wisdom*, chap. ii. 4. The flourish of oratory, or the accuracies of philosophical language, upon which the Greeks so much prided themselves, and which seem to have been the peculiar recommendations of some of the heads of the faction in this church, that most opposed this apostle. He did not preach the gospel in this manner, lest *the cross of Christ should be of none effect*; lest the success should have been ascribed to the force of art, and not of truth; not to the plain doctrine of a crucified Jesus, but the powerful oratory of those who spread it; and hereby the honour of the cross had been diminished, or eclipsed. Paul had been bred up himself in Jewish learning at the feet of Gamaliel, but in preaching the cross of Christ he laid his learning aside. He preached and crucified Jesus in plain language, and told the people, that that Jesus who was crucified at Jerusalem, was the *Son of God*, and *Saviour of men*; and that all who would be saved, must repent of their sins, and believe in him, and submit to his government and laws. This truth needed no artificial dress, it shone out with the greatest majesty in its own light, and prevailed in the world by its divine authority, and the *demonstration of the Spirit*, without any human helps. The plain preaching of a crucified Jesus was more powerful than all the oratory and philosophy of the heathen world.

(2.) We have the different effects of this preaching. To them that perish it is foolishness, but to them which are saved it is the power of God, ver. 18. *It is to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness, but to them who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God*, ver. 23, 24. (1.) Christ crucified is a *stumbling-block* to the Jews. They could not get over it. They had a conceit that their expected Messiah was to be a great temporal prince, and therefore would never own one who made so mean an appearance in life, and died so accursed a death, for their deliverer and king. They despised him, and looked upon him as execrable, because he was hanged on a tree, and because he did not gratify them with a sign to their mind, though his divine power shone out in innumerable miracles. The Jews require a sign, ver. 22. see *Matth. xii. 38.* (2.) He was to the Greeks foolishness. They laughed at the story of a crucified Saviour, and despised the apostles way of telling it. *They sought for wisdom*. They were men of wit and reading, men that had cultivated arts and sciences, and had, for some ages, been in a man the very mint of knowledge and learning. There was nothing in the plain doctrine of the cross to suit their taste, or humour their vanity, or gratify a curious and wrangling temper: They entertained it therefore with scorn and contempt. What, hope to be saved by one that could not save himself? and trust in one who was condemned and crucified for a malefactor, a man of mean birth and poor condition in life, and cut off by so vile and opprobrious a death? This was what the pride of human reason and learning could not relish. The Greeks thought it little better than stupidity to receive such a doctrine, and pay this high regard to such a person: and thus were they justly left to perish in their pride and obstinacy. Note, It is just with God to leave them to themselves, who pour such proud contempt on divine wisdom and grace. (3.) To them which are called and saved, *He is the wisdom of God, and the power of God*. Those who are called and sanctified, who receive the gospel, and are enlightened by the Spirit of God, discern more glorious discoveries of God's wisdom and power in the doctrine of Christ crucified, than in all his other works. Note, Those who are saved, are reconciled to the doctrine of the cross, and led into an experimental acquaintance with the mysteries of Christ crucified.

(3.) We have here the triumphs of the cross over human wisdom; according to the ancient prophecy, *Isa. xxix. 14.* *I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?* ver. 19, 20. All the valued learning of this world was confounded, baffled, and eclipsed by the Christian revelation, and the glorious triumphs of the cross. The heathen politicians and philosophers, the Jewish rabbies and doctors, the curious searchers into the secrets of nature, were all posed and put to a nonplus. This scheme lay out of the reach of the deepest statesmen and philosophers, and the greatest pretenders to learning both among the Jews and Greeks. When God would save the world, he took a way by himself; and good reason, for *the world by wisdom knew not God*, ver. 21. All the boasted science of the

heathen world, did not, could not effectually bring home the world to God. In spite of all their wisdom, ignorance still prevailed, iniquity still abounded. Men were puffed up by the imaginary knowledge, and rather further alienated from God: and therefore it pleased him, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe. By the foolishness of preaching, not such in truth, but in vulgar reckoning. (1.) The thing preached was foolishness in the eyes of worldly wise men. Our living through one that died, our being blessed by one who was made a curse, our being justified by one who was himself condemned, was all folly and inconsistency to men blinded with self-conceit, and wedded to their own prejudices, and the boasted discoveries of their reason and philosophy. (2.) The manner of preaching the gospel was foolishness to them too. None of the famous men for wisdom or eloquence were employed to plant the church, or propagate the gospel. A few fishermen were called out and sent upon this errand. These were commissioned to disciple the nations; the vessels chosen to convey the treasure of saving knowledge to the world. There was nothing in them that at first view looked grand or august enough to come from God. And the proud pretenders to learning and wisdom despised the doctrine for the sake of those who dispensed it. And yet the foolishness of God is wiser than men, ver. 15. Those methods of divine conduct that vain men are apt to censure as unwise and weak, have more true, solid, and successful wisdom in them, than all the learning and wisdom that is among men. You see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called, ver. 26, &c. You see the state of Christianity; not many men of learning, or authority, or honourable extraction, are called. There is a great deal of meanness and weakness in the outward appearance of our religion. For (1.) Few of distinguished character in any of these respects were chosen for the work of the ministry. God did not chuse philosophers, nor orators, nor statesmen, nor men of wealth and power, and interest in the world, to publish the gospel of grace and peace. Not the wise men after the flesh; though men would be apt to think a reputation for wisdom and learning might have contributed much to the success of the gospel. Not the mighty and noble, however men might be apt to imagine, that secular pomp and power would make way for its reception in the world. But God seeth not as man seeth: He hath chosen the foolish things of the world, the weak things of the world, the base and despicable things of the world, men of mean birth, of low rank, of no liberal education, to be the preachers of the gospel and planters of the church. His thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor his ways as our ways. He is a better judge than we what instruments and measures will best serve the purposes of his glory. (2.) Few of distinguished rank and character were called to be Christians. As the preachers were poor and mean, so generally were the converts. Few of the wise, and mighty, and noble, embraced the doctrine of the cross. The first Christians, both among Jews and Greeks, were weak, and foolish, and base; men of mean furniture as to their mental improvements, and very mean rank and condition as to their outward estate: and yet what glorious discoveries are there of divine wisdom in the whole scheme of the gospel, and in this particular circumstance of its success?

(4.) We have an account how admirably all is fitted, (1.) To beat down the pride and vanity of men. God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; men of no learning to confound the most learned: the weak things of the world to confound the mighty: men of mean rank and circumstances, to confound and prevail against all the power and authority of earthly kings: and base things, and things that are despised: things which men have in the lowest esteem, or in the utmost contempt; to pour contempt and disgrace on all they value and have in veneration. And things which are not, to bring to nought, to abolish things that are. The conversion of the Gentiles, (of whom the Jews had the most contemptuous and vilifying thoughts) to open a way to the abolishing that constitution, of which they were so fond, and upon which they valued themselves so much, as for the sake of it to despise the rest of the world. It is common for the Jews to speak of the Gentiles under this character, as things that are not. Thus, in the apocryphal book of Esther, she is brought in praying that God would not give his scepter to them which are not, Esth. iv. 11. And Esdras, in one of the apocryphal books under his name, speaks to God, of the heathen, as those which are reputed as nothing, 2 Esd. vi. 56, 57. And the apostle Paul seems to have this common language of the Jews in his view, when he calls Abraham the father of us all before him whom he believed, God, who calleth those things that be not, as though they were, Rom. iv. 17. The gospel is fitted to bring down both the pride of Jews and Greeks, to shame the boasted science and learning of the Greeks, and take down that constitution on which the Jews valued themselves, and despised all the world besides. That no flesh should glory in his presence, ver. 29. That there might be no pretence for boasting. Divine wisdom alone had the contrivance of the method of redemption; divine grace alone revealed it, and made it known. It lay in both respects out of human reach. And the doctrine and discovery prevailed, in spite of all the opposition it met with from human art or authority. So effectually did God veil the glory and disgrace the pride of man

in all. The gospel-dispensation is a contrivance to humble man. But, (2.) It is as admirably fitted to glorify God. There is a great deal of power and glory in the substance and life of Christianity. Though the ministers were poor and unlearned, and the converts generally of the meanest rank, yet the hand of the Lord went along with the preachers, and was mighty in the hearts of the hearers. And Jesus Christ was made both to ministers and Christians what was truly great and honourable. All we have, we have from God as the fountain, and in and through Christ as the channel of conveyance. He is made of God to us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, ver. 30. All we need or can desire. We are foolishness, ignorant and blind in the things of God, with all our boasted knowledge; and he is made wisdom to us. We are guilty, obnoxious to justice; and he is made righteousness, our great atonement and sacrifice. We are depraved and corrupt; and he is made sanctification, the spring of our spiritual life; from him, the head, it is communicated to all the members of his mystical body by his holy Spirit. We are in bonds, and he is made redemption to us, our saviour and deliverer. Observe, That where Christ is made righteousness to any soul, he is also made sanctification. He never discharges from the guilt of sin, without delivering from the power of it. And he is made righteousness and sanctification, that he may in the end be made complete redemption, and free the soul from the very being of sin, and loose the body from the bonds of the grave. And what is designed in all, is, that all flesh may glory in the Lord, ver. 31. Observe, That it is the will of God, that all our glorying should be in the Lord: and our salvation being only through Christ, it is thereby effectually provided it should be so. Man is humbled, and God glorified and exalted by the whole scheme.

C H A P. II.

The apostle proceeds with this argument in this chapter, and (1.) Remembers the Corinthians of the plain manner wherein he delivered the gospel to them, ver. 1—5. But yet (2.) Shews them that he had communicated to them a treasure of the truest and highest wisdom; such as exceeded all the attainments of learned men; such as could never have entered into the heart of man, if it had not been revealed; nor can be received and improved to salvation, but by the light and influence of that Spirit who revealed it, ver. 6. ad fin.

1. **A**ND I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech, or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. 2. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. 3. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. 4. And my speech, and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power: 5. That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

In this passage the apostle pursues his design, and reminds the Corinthians, how he acted when he first preached the gospel amongst them. 1. As to the matter or subject, he tells us, ver. 2. He determined to know nothing among them but Jesus Christ, and him crucified; to make a shew of no other knowledge but this; to preach nothing, to discover the knowledge of nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified. Note, Christ in his person and offices, is the sum and substance of the gospel, and ought to be the great subject of a gospel minister's preaching. His business is to display the banner of the cross, and invite people under it. Any one that heard Paul preach, found him to harp so continually on this string, that he would say he knew nothing but Christ and him crucified. Whatsoever other knowledge he had, this was the only knowledge he discovered, and shewed himself concerned to propagate among his hearers. 2. The manner wherein he preached Christ is here also observable. (1.) Negatively: He came not among them with excellency of speech, or wisdom, ver. 1. His speech and preaching were not with enticing words of man's wisdom, ver. 4. He did not affect to appear a fine orator, or a deep philosopher; nor insinuate into their minds, by a flourish of words, or a pompous shew of deep reason, and extraordinary science and skill. He did not set himself to captivate the ear, by fine turns and eloquent expressions; nor to please and entertain the fancy with lofty flights of sublime notions. Neither his speech, nor the wisdom he taught, favoured of human skill: he learnt both in another school. Divine wisdom needed not to be set off with such human ornaments. (2.) Positively: He came among them, declaring the testimony of God, ver. 1. He published a divine revelation, and gave in sufficient vouchers for the authority of it, both by its consonancy to antient predictions, and by present miraculous operations, and there he left the matter. Ornaments of speech and philosophical skill and argument, could add no weight to what came recommended by such authority. He was also among them

them in weakness, and fear, and in much trembling, and yet his speech and preaching was in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power, ver. 4, 5. His enemies in the church of Corinth, speak very contemptuously of him; his bodily presence, say they, is weak, and his speech contemptible, 2 Cor. x. 10. possibly he had a little body, and a low voice; but though he had not so good an elocution as some, it is plain he was no mean speaker. The men of Lystra looked on him to be the heathen god Mercury, come down to them in the form of a man, because he was the chief speaker, Acts xiv. 12. Nor did he want courage or resolution to go through his work; he was in nothing terrified by his adversaries. Yet he was no boaster. He did not proudly vaunt himself, like his opposers. He acted in his office with much modesty, concern, and care. He carried it with great humility amongst them; not as one grown vain with the honour and authority conferred on him, but as one concerned to approve himself faithful; and fearful of himself, lest he should mismanage in his trust. Observe, None know the fear and trembling of faithful ministers, who are jealous over souls with a godly jealousy. And a deep sense of their own weakness is the occasion of this fear and trembling. They know how insufficient they are, and are therefore fearful for themselves. But though Paul managed with this modesty and concern, yet he spake with authority, in the demonstration of the Spirit, and of power. He preached the truths of Christ in their native dress, with plainness of speech. He laid down the doctrine as the Spirit delivered it; and left the Spirit, by his external operation in signs and miracles, and his internal influences on the hearts of men, to demonstrate the truth of it, and procure its reception. 3. Here is the end mentioned for which he preached Christ crucified in this manner, viz. That their faith should not stand in the wisdom of man, but the power of God, ver. 5. That they might not be drawn by human motives, or overcome by mere human arguments, lest it should be said that either rhetoric or logic had made them Christians. But when nothing but Christ crucified was plainly preached, the success must be entirely attributed to a divine power accompanying the word: Their faith must be founded not on human wisdom, but divine evidence and operation. The gospel was so preached, that God might appear and be glorified in all.

6. Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought. 7. But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory. 8. Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. 9. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. 10. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. 11. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. 12. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. 13. Which things also we speak, not in the words which mans wisdom teacheth, but which the holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. 14. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. 15. But he that is spiritual, judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. 16. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.

In this part of the chapter, the apostle shews them, that though he had not come to them with the excellency of human wisdom, with any of the boasted knowledge and literature of the Jews or Greeks, yet he had communicated to them a treasure of the truest and the highest wisdom. We speak wisdom among them who are perfect, ver. 6. among them who are well instructed in Christianity, and come to some maturity in the things of God. They that receive the doctrine as divine, and having been illuminated by the holy Spirit, have looked well into it, discover true wisdom in it. They take in not only the plain history of Christ and him crucified, but discern the deep and admirable designs of the divine wisdom therein. Though what we preach be foolishness to the world, it is wisdom to them. They are made wise by it, and can discern wisdom in it. Note, Those who are wise themselves, are the only proper judges of what is wisdom; not indeed the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, but the wisdom of God in a mystery, ver. 6, 7. Not worldly wisdom, but divine; not such as the men of this world could have discovered,

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nor such as worldly men, under the conduct of pride, and passion, and appetite, and worldly interest, and destitute of the Spirit of God, can receive. Note, How different is the judgment of God from that of the world? He seeth not as man seeth. The wisdom he teacheth is of a quite different kind from what passeth under that notion in the world. It is not the wisdom of politicians, nor philosophers, nor rabbies, see ver. 9. not such as they teach, nor such as they relish; but the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom of God; what he had a long time kept to himself and concealed from the world, and the depth of which, now it is revealed, none but himself can fathom. It is the mystery which hath been hid from ages and generations, though now made manifest to the saints, Col. i. 26. hid in a manner entirely from the heathen world, and made mysterious to the Jews, by being wrapped up in dark types and distant prophecies, but revealed and made known to us by the Spirit of God. Note, The privilege of those who enjoy the gospel-revelation. To them types are unveiled, mysteries made plain, prophecies interpreted, and the secret counsels of God published and laid open. The wisdom of God in a mystery is now made manifest to the saints. Now concerning this wisdom, observe,

(1.) The rise and original of it: It was ordained of God, before the world, to our glory, ver. 7. It was ordained of God. He had determined long ago to reveal and make it known, from many ages past, from the beginning, nay from eternity; and that to our glory, the glory of us, either us apostles, or us Christians. It was great honour put upon the apostles to be intrusted with the revelation of this wisdom. It was a great and honourable privilege for Christians to have this glorious wisdom discovered to them: and the wisdom of God discovered in the gospel, the divine wisdom taught by the gospel, prepares for our everlasting glory and happiness in the world to come. The counsels of God concerning our redemption, are dated from eternity, and designed for the glory and happiness of the saints. And what deep wisdom was in these counsels! Note, The wisdom of God is both employed and displayed for the honour of his saints; employed from eternity, and displayed in time to make them glorious both here and hereafter, in time and to eternity. What honour doth he put on his saints!

(2.) The ignorance of the great men of the world about it: Which none of the princes of this world knew, ver. 8. the principal men in authority and power, or in wisdom and learning. The Roman governour, and the guides and rulers of the Jewish church and nation, seem to be the persons here chiefly meant. These were the princes of this world, or this age, who, had they known this true and heavenly wisdom, would not have crucified the Lord of glory. This, Pilate and the Jewish rulers literally did, when our redeemer was crucified upon the sentence of the one, and the clamorous demands of the other. Observe, Jesus Christ is the Lord of glory; a title much too great for any creature to bear: and therefore was he hated, because he was not known. Had his crucifiers known him, known who and what he was, they would have withheld their impious hands, and not have taken and slain him. This he pleaded with his Father for their pardon; Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do, Luke xxiii. 34. Note, There are many things which people would not do, if they knew the wisdom of God in the great work of redemption. They act as they do, because they are blind or heedless: they know not the truth, or will not attend to it.

(3.) It is such wisdom as could not have been discovered without a revelation; according to what the prophet Esay saith, Isa. lxiv. 4. Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him; for him that waiteth for him, that waiteth for his mercy, as the LXX. It was a testimony of love to God in Jewish believers, to live in expectation of the accomplishment of evangelical promises. Waiting upon God is an evidence of love to him. Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him, Isa. xxv. 9. Observe, There are things which God hath prepared for them that love him and wait for him. There are such things prepared in a future life for them. Things which sense cannot discover, no present information can convey to our ears, nor can yet enter our hearts. Life and immortality are brought to light through the gospel, 2 Tim. i. 10. But the apostle speaks here of the subject-matter of the divine revelation under the gospel. These are such as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard. Observe, The great truths of the gospel are things lying out of the sphere of human discovery. Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard them, nor have they entered into the heart of man. Were they objects of sense, could they be discovered by an eye of reason, and communicated by the ear to the mind, as matters of common human knowledge may, there had been no need of a revelation. But lying out of the sphere of nature, we cannot discover them, but by the light of revelation. And therefore we must take them as they lie in the scriptures, and as God has been pleased to reveal them.

(4.) We here see by whom this wisdom is discovered to us: God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit, ver. 10. The scripture is given by inspiration of God. Holy men spake of old as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, 2 Pet. i. 21. And the apostles spake by inspiration of the same Spirit, as he taught them, and gave them utterance. Here is a proof of the divine authority of the holy

scriptures.

scriptures. Paul wrote what he taught, and what he taught was revealed of God by his Spirit; *That Spirit that searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God, and knows the things of God, as the spirit of a man that is in him knows the things of a man*, ver. 11. A double argument is drawn from these words in proof of the divinity of the Holy Ghost. (1.) *Omniscience* is attributed to him: *He searcheth all things, even the deep things of God*. He has exact knowledge of all things, and enters into the very depths of God, penetrates into his most secret counsels. Now, who can have such a thorow knowledge of God, but God? (2.) This allusion seems to imply, that the Holy Spirit is as much in God, as a man's mind is in himself. Now the mind of the man is plainly essential to him. He cannot be without his mind. Nor can God be without his Spirit. He is as much and as intimately one with God, as the man's mind is with the man. The man knows his own mind, because his mind is one with himself: The Spirit of God knows the things of God, because he is one with God. And as no man can come at the knowledge of what is in another man's mind, till he communicates and reveals it; so neither can we know the secret counsels and purposes of God, till they are made known to us by his holy Spirit. We cannot know them *at all*, till he has proposed them *objectively* (as it is called) in the external revelation: we cannot know or believe them *to salvation*, till he enlightens the faculty, opens the eye of the mind, and gives us such a knowledge and faith of them. And it was by this Spirit that the apostles had received the *wisdom of God in a mystery*, which they spake. *Now we have received not the Spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things freely given to us of God*, ver. 12. Not the spirit which is in the *wise men of the world*, ver. 6. nor in the *rulers of the world*, ver. 8. but the *Spirit which is of God*, proceedeth from God. We have what we deliver in the name of God, by inspiration from him; and it is by his gracious illumination and influence that *we know the things freely given to us of God*, unto salvation, i. e. the great privileges of the gospel, which are the free gift of God, distributions of mere and rich grace. Though these things are given us, and the revelation of this gift be made to us, we cannot know them to any saving purpose, till we have the Spirit. The apostles had the revelation of these things from the Spirit of God, and the saving impress of them from the same Spirit.

(5.) We see here in what a *manner* this wisdom was taught or communicated. *Which things we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth*, ver. 13. They had received the wisdom they taught, not from the wise men of the world, not from their own inquiry or invention, but from the Spirit of God. Nor did they put a human dress on it, but plainly declared the doctrine of Christ, in terms also taught them by the holy Spirit. He not only gave them the knowledge of these things, but gave them utterance. Observe, The truths of God need no garnishing by human skill or eloquence, but look best in the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth. The Spirit of God knows much better how to speak of the things of God, than the best critics, orators, or philosophers. *Comparing spiritual things with spiritual*, i. e. one part of revelation with another; the revelation of the gospel with that of the Jews; the discoveries of the New Testament with the types and prophecies of the Old. The comparing matters of revelation with matters of science; things supernatural with things natural and common, is going by a wrong measure. Spiritual things, when brought together, will help to illustrate one another; but if the principles of human art and science are to be made a test of revelation, we shall certainly judge amiss concerning it, and the things contained it. Or, *adapting spiritual things to spiritual*. Speaking of spiritual matters, matters of revelation, and the spiritual life, in language that is proper and plain. The language of the Spirit of God is the most proper to convey his meaning.

(6.) We have an account how this wisdom is received. (1.) *The natural man receiveth not the things of God, for they are foolishness to him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*, ver. 14. The *natural man*, the *animal man*; either the man under the power of corruption, and never yet illuminated by the Spirit of God, such as St. Jude calls *sensual, not having the Spirit*, ver. 19. Men unsanctified receive not the things of God. The understanding, through the corruption of nature by the fall, and through the confirmation of this disorder by customary sin, is utterly unapt to receive the rays of divine light; it is prejudiced against them. The truths of God are foolishness to such a mind. The man looks on them as trifling and impertinent things, not worth his minding. *The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not*, John i. 5. Not that the natural faculty of discerning is lost, but evil inclinations and wicked principles render the man unwilling to enter into the mind of God, in the spiritual matters of his kingdom, and yield to their force and power. It is the quickning beams of the Spirit of truth and holiness, that must help the mind to discern their excellency, and to so thorough a conviction of their truth, as heartily to receive and embrace them. Thus the *natural man*, the man destitute of the Spirit of God, cannot know them, *because they are spiritually discerned*. Or, the *natural man*, that is, the *wise men of the world*, chap. i. 19, 20. the *wise man after the flesh*, or according to the

flesh, ver. 26. one who hath the *wisdom of the world*, *man's wisdom*, chap. ii. 4, 5, 6. a man, as *some of the ancients*, that would learn all truth by his own ratiocinations, receive nothing by faith, nor own any need of supernatural assistance. This was very much the character of the pretenders to philosophy, and the Grecian learning and wisdom at that day. Such a man receives *not the things of the Spirit of God*. Revelation is not with him a principle of science; he looks upon it as delirium and dotage, the extravagant thought of some deluded dreamer. It is no way to wisdom among the famous masters of the world; and for that reason he can have no knowledge of things revealed, *because they are only spiritually discerned*, or made known by the revelation of the Spirit, which is a principle of science or knowledge which he will not admit. (2.) *But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged, or discerned, of no man*, ver. 15. Either he who is sanctified and made *spiritually-minded*, Rom. viii. 6. *judgeth all things, or discerneth all things*; he is capable of judging about matters of human wisdom, and has also a relish and savour of divine truths. He sees divine wisdom, and experiences divine power in gospel-revelations and mysteries, which the carnal and unsanctified mind looks upon as weakness and folly; as things destitute of all power, and not worthy any regard. It is the sanctified mind that must discern the real beauties of holiness: but by the refinement of its faculties, they do not lose their power of discerning and judging about common and natural things. The spiritual man may judge of all things, natural and supernatural, human and divine, the deductions of reason, and the discoveries of revelation. But he himself is judged, or discerned, of *NO MAN*. God's saints are his *hidden ones*, Psal. lxxxiii. 3. *Their life is hid with Christ in God*, Col. iii. 3. The carnal man knows no more of a spiritual man, than he doth of other spiritual things. He is a stranger to the principles, and pleasures, and actings of the divine life. The spiritual man doth not lie open to his observation. Or, *he that is spiritual*, i. e. has had divine revelations made to him, received them as such, and founds his faith and religion upon them, he can judge both of common things, and things divine; he can discern what is, and what is not the doctrine of the gospel, and of salvation; and whether a man preaches the truths of God, or not. He doth not lose the power of reasoning, nor renounce the principles of it, by founding his faith and religion on revelation. But *he himself is judged of no man*. Can be judged, so as to be confuted, by no man; nor can any man who is not spiritual, not under a divine *afflatus* himself; see chap. xiv. 37. or not founding his faith under a divine revelation, discern or judge whether what he speaks be true or divine or not. In short, he who founds all his knowledge upon principles of science, and the mere light of reason, can never be a judge of the truth or falsehood of what is received by revelation. *For who hath known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?* ver. 16. i. e. the *spiritual man*. Who can enter so far into the mind of God, as to instruct him who hath the Spirit of God, is under his inspiration? He only is the person to whom God immediately communicates the knowledge of his will. And who can inform or instruct him in the mind of God, who is so immediately under the conduct of his own Spirit? Very few have known any thing of the mind of God by a natural power. But, adds the apostle, *we have the mind of Christ*: and the mind of Christ is the mind of God: He is God, and the principal messenger and prophet of God. And the apostles were empowered by his Spirit, to make known his mind to us. And in the holy scriptures, the mind of Christ, and the mind of God in Christ, is fully revealed to us. Observe, It is the great privilege of Christians, that they have the mind of Christ revealed to them by his Spirit.

C H A P. III.

In this chapter the apostle (1.) *Blames the Corinthians for their carnality and divisions*, ver. 1—4. (2.) *He instructs them how what was amiss among them might be rectified, by remembering*, (1.) *That their ministers were no more than ministers*, ver. 5. (2.) *That they were unanimous, and carried on the same design*, ver. 5—10. (3.) *That they built on one and the same foundation*, ver. 11—16. (3.) *He exhorts them to give due honour to their bodies, by keeping them pure*, ver. 16, 17. *And to humility and self-diffidence*, ver. 18—21. (4.) *And deborts them from glorying in particular ministers, because of the equal interest they had in all*, ver. 22, ad fin.

1. **A**ND I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, *even as unto babes in Christ*. 2. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. 3. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas *there is among you envying and strife, and divisions*, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? 4. For while one saith, I am of Paul, and another, I am of Apollos, are ye not carnal?

Here St. Paul blames the Corinthians for their weakness and non-proficiency. They who are sanctified, are so only in part: There is still room for growth and increase, both in *grace and knowledge*, 2 Pet. iii. 18. Those, who through divine grace are renewed to a spiritual life, may yet, in many things be defective. The apostle tells them *he could not speak to them, as unto spiritual men, but as unto carnal men, as to babes in Christ*, ver. 1. They were so far from forming their maxims and measures upon the foot of divine revelation, and entering into the Spirit of the gospel, that it was but too evident they were much under the command of carnal and corrupt affections. They were still very *babes in Christ*. They had received some of the first principles of Christianity, but were grown up to no maturity of understanding in them, or of faith and holiness. And yet it is plain from several passages in this epistle, that the Corinthians were very proud of their wisdom and knowledge. Note, That it is but too common for persons of very moderate knowledge and understanding, to have a great measure of self-conceit. The apostle assigns their little proficiency in the knowledge of Christianity, as a reason why he had communicated no more of the deep things of it to them. They could not bear such food, they needed to be fed with milk, not with meat, ver. 2. Note, It is the duty of a faithful minister of Christ, to consult the capacities of his hearers, and teach them as they can bear. And yet it is natural for babes to grow up to men; and babes in Christ should endeavour to grow in stature, and become men in Christ. It is expected, that their advances in knowledge should be in proportion to their means and opportunities, and their time of professing religion; that they may be able to bear discourses of the mysteries of our religion, and not always rest in plain things. It was a reproach to the Corinthians, that they had so long sat under the ministry of St. Paul, and had made no more improvement in Christian knowledge. Note, Christians are utterly to blame, who do not endeavour to grow in grace and knowledge. (2.) He blames them for their carnality, and gives their contention and discord about their ministers, as evidence of it. *For ye are yet carnal; for whereas there are among you envyings, and strifes, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?* ver. 2. They had mutual emulations, and quarrels, and factions among them, upon the account of their ministers; while one said, *I am of Paul, and another, I am of Apollos*, ver. 4. These were proofs of their being carnal; that fleshly interests and affections too much swayed them. Note, Contentions and quarrels about religion, are sad evidences of remaining carnality. True religion makes men peaceable, and not contentious. Factious spirits act upon human principles, not upon principles of true religion; they are guided by their own pride and passions, and not by rules of Christianity; *do ye not walk as men?* Note, It is to be lamented, that many who should walk as Christians, *i. e.* above the common rate of men, do indeed walk as men, live and act too much like other men.

5. Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? 6. I have planted, Apollos watered: but God gave the increase. 7. So then, neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth: but God that giveth the increase. 8. Now he that planteth, and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour. 9. For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building. 10. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master-builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.

Here the apostle instructs them how to cure this humour, and rectify what was amiss among them upon this head. (1.) By reminding them, that the ministers about whom they contended, were but ministers: *Who then is Paul, or who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed? Even as the Lord gave to every man*, ver. 5. But ministers, no more than instruments used by the God of all grace. Some of the factious people in Corinth seem to have made more of them, as if they were *lords of their faith*, authors of their religion. Note, we should take care not to deify ministers, or put them into the place of God. Apostles were not the authors of our faith and religion; though they were authorized and qualified to reveal and propagate it. They acted in this office *as God gave to every man*. Observe, All the gifts and powers that even apostles discovered and exerted in the work of the ministry, were from God. They were intended to manifest their mission and doctrine to be divine. It was perfectly wrong, upon their account, to transfer that regard to the apostles, which was solely to be paid to the divine authority by which they acted, and to God, from whom they had their authority. *Paul had planted, and Apollos had watered*, ver. 6. Both were useful, one for one purpose, the other for a different. Note, God makes use of variety of instruments, and fits them to their several use

and intention. Paul was fitted for *planting work*, and Apollos, for *watering work*; but *God gave the increase*. Note, The success of the ministry must be derived from the divine blessing. *Neither he that planteth is any thing, nor he that watereth, but God who giveth the increase*, ver. 7. Even apostolical ministers are nothing of themselves, can do nothing with efficacy and success, unless God give the increase. Note, The best qualified and most faithful ministers have a just sense of their own insufficiency, and are very desirous that God should have all the glory of their success. Paul and Apollos are nothing at all in their own account, but God is all in all. (2.) By representing to them the unanimity of Christ's ministers. *He that planteth, and he that watereth, are one*, ver. 8. Employed by one master, entrusted with the same revelation, busied in one work, and engaged in one design; in harmony with one another, however they may be set in opposition to each other by factious party-makers. They have their different gifts from one and the same Spirit, for the very same purposes; and they heartily carry on the same design. Planters and waterers, are but fellow-labourers in the same work.

Note, All the faithful ministers of Christ are one, in the great business and intentions of their ministry. They may have difference of sentiment in lesser things: They may have their debates and contests; but they heartily concur in the great design of honouring God and saving souls, by promoting true Christianity in the world. And all such may expect a glorious recompence of their fidelity, and in proportion to it. *Every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour*. Their business is one, but some may mind it more than others: Their end and design is one, but some may pursue it more closely than others: Their master also is one, and yet this good and gracious master may make a difference in the rewards he gives, according to the different service they do. *Every one's own work shall have its own reward*. They that work hardest shall fare best: They that are most faithful shall have the greatest reward; and glorious work it is in which all faithful ministers are employed. *They are labourers with God*, *συνεργοί*, *co-workers, fellow-labourers*, ver. 9. not indeed in the same order and degree, but in subordination to him, as instruments in his hand. They are engaged in his business. They are working together with God, in promoting the purposes of his glory, and the salvation of precious souls; and he who knows their work will take care they do not labour in vain. Men may neglect and vilify one minister, whilst they cry up another, and have no reason for either: They may condemn when they should commend, and applaud what they should neglect and avoid; but the judgment of God is according to truth. He never rewards but upon just reason, and he ever rewards in proportion to the diligence and faithfulness of his servants. Note, Faithful ministers, when they are ill used by men, should encourage themselves in God. And it is to God, the chief agent and director of the great work of the gospel, to whom they that labour with him should endeavour to approve themselves: They are always under his eye, employed in his husbandry and building; and therefore to be sure he will carefully look over them. *Ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building*: And therefore are neither of Paul nor of Apollos; neither belong to one nor other, but to God: They only plant and water you, but it is the divine blessing on his own husbandry, that alone can make it yield fruit. You are not our husbandry, but God's: We work under him, and with him, and for him: It is all for God, that we have been doing amongst you. You are God's husbandry and building: He had spoken to the former metaphor before, and now he goes on to the other of a building. *According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master-builder; I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon*. Paul here calls himself a *wise master-builder*. A character doubly reflecting honour on him. It was honourable to be a master-builder in the edifice of God, but it added to his character to be a wise one. Persons may be in an office, for which they are not qualified, or not so thoroughly qualified as this expression implies Paul was. But though he gives himself such a character, it is not to gratify his own pride, but to magnify divine grace. He was a wise master-builder, but the grace of God made him such. Note, It is no crime in a Christian, but much to his commendation, to take notice of the good that is in him, to the praise of divine grace. Spiritual pride is abominable, it is making use of the greatest favours of God to feed our own vanity, and make idols of ourselves. But to take notice of the favours of God, to promote our gratitude to him, and to speak of them to his honour, be they of what sort they will, is but a proper expression of the duty and regard we owe him. Note, Ministers should not be proud of their gifts or graces; but the better qualified they are for their work, and the more success they have in it, the more thankful should they be to God for his distinguishing goodness. *I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon*. As before he had said, I have planted, Apollos watered. It was Paul laid the foundation of a church amongst them. He had *begotten them through the gospel*, chap. iv. 19. Whatever instructors they had besides, *they had not many fathers*. He would derogate from none that had done service amongst them, nor would he be robbed of his own honour and respect. Note, Faithful ministers may, and ought to have a concern for their own reputation. Their usefulness depends much upon it. *But let every man*

man take heed how he buildeth thereon. This is a proper caution ; there may be very indifferent building on a good foundation. It is easy to err here, and great care should be used, not only to lay a sure and right foundation, but to erect a regular building upon it. Nothing must be laid upon it, but what the foundation will bear, and what is of a piece with it. Gold and dirt must not be mingled together. Note, Ministers of Christ should take great care, that they do not build their own fancies or false reasonings on the foundation of divine revelations. What they preach should be the plain doctrine of their Master, or what is perfectly agreeable with it.

11. For other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12. Now if any man build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble : 13. Every mans work shall be made manifest. For the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire ; and the fire shall try every mans work, of what sort it is. 14. If any mans work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. 15. If any mans work shall be burnt, he shall suffer loss : but he himself shall be saved ; yet so, as by fire.

Here the apostle informs us what foundation he had laid at the bottom of all his labours among them, *even Jesus Christ the chief-corner stone*, Eph. ii. 20. Upon this foundation all the faithful ministers of Christ build : Upon this rock all Christians found their hopes. They that build their hopes of heaven on any other foundation, build upon the sand. *Other foundation can no man lay, besides what is laid, even Jesus Christ.*

Note, The doctrine of our Saviour, and his mediation, is the principal doctrine of Christianity. It lies at the bottom, and is the foundation of all the rest. Leave out this, and you lay waste all our comforts, and leave no foundation for our hopes, as sinners. It is in Christ *only that God is reconciling a sinful world to himself*, 2 Cor. v. 19. But of those that hold the foundation, and embrace the general doctrine of Christ's being the mediator between God and man, there are two sorts.

(1.) Some build upon this foundation *gold, silver, and precious stones*, ver. 12. *viz.* those who receive and propagate the pure truths of the gospel ; that hold nothing but the *truth, as it is in Jesus*, and preach nothing else. This is building well upon a *good* foundation, making all of a piece ; when ministers not only depend upon Christ as the great prophet of the church, and take him for their guide and infallible teacher, but receive and spread the doctrines he taught in their purity, without any corrupt mixtures, without adding or diminishing.

(2.) Others build *wood, hay, and stubble* on this foundation, *i. e.* though they adhere to the foundation, they depart from the mind of Christ in many particulars ; substitute their own fancies and inventions, in the room of his doctrines and institutions, and build upon the good foundation what will not abide the test, when the day of trial comes, and the fire must make it manifest. As wood, hay, and stubble, will not bear the trial by fire, but must be consumed in it. There is a time coming when a discovery will be made of what men have built on this foundation. *Every man's work shall be made manifest* ; shall be laid open to view, to his own, and that of others. Some may, in the simplicity of their hearts, build wood and stubble on the good foundation, and know not all the while what they have been doing ; but in the day of the Lord their own conduct shall appear to them in its proper light. Every man's work shall be made manifest to himself, and made manifest to others, both those that have been misled by him, and those that have escaped his errors. Now we may be mistaken in ourselves and others, but there is a day coming that will cure all our mistakes ; and shew us ourselves, and shew us our actions in the true light, without covering or disguise. *For the day shall declare it, viz. every man's work, because it shall be revealed by fire ; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is*, ver. 13. The day shall declare and make it manifest, the last day, the great day of trial ; see chap. iv. 5. Though some understand it of the time when the Jewish nation was destroyed, and their constitution thereby abolished ; when the superstructure Judaizing teachers would have raised on the Christian foundation, was manifested to be no better than hay and stubble, that would not bear the trial. The expression carries in it a plain allusion to the refiner's art, in which the fire separates and distinguishes the dross from the gold and silver ; as it also will silver and gold, and precious stones, that will endure the fire, from wood and hay, and stubble that will be consumed in it. Note, There is a day coming that will as nicely distinguish one man from another, and one man's work from another's, as the fire distinguishes gold from dross, or metal that will bear the fire, from other materials that will be consumed in it. In that day,

(1.) Some mens works will *abide the trial* : will be found standard. It will appear, that they not only held the foundation, but that they built regularly and well upon it ; that they laid on proper materials, and in due form and order. The foundation and the superstructure were all of a piece. The foundation-truths,

and those that had a manifest connexion with them, were taught together. It may not be so easy to discern this connexion now, nor know what works will abide the trial then ; but that day will make a full discovery. And such a builder shall not, cannot, fail of a reward. He will have praise and honour in that day, and eternal recompence after it. Note, Fidelity in the ministers of Christ will meet with full and ample rewards in a future life. They who spread true and pure religion in all the branches of it, and whose work will abide in the great day, shall receive a reward. And Lord, how great ! how much exceeding their deserts !

(2.) There are others, *whose works shall be burnt*, ver. 15. Whose corrupt opinions and doctrines, or vain inventions and usages in the worship of God, shall be discovered, disowned, and rejected in that day : Shall be first manifested to be corrupt, and then disapproved of God, and rejected. Note, The great day will pluck off all disguises, and make things appear as they are. *He whose work shall be burnt, will suffer loss.* If he has built upon the right foundation wood, and hay, and stubble, he will suffer loss. His weakness and corruption will be the lessening of his glory, though he may, in the general, have been an honest and an upright Christian. This part of his work will be lost, turning no way to his advantage, though *himself may be saved*. Observe, Those who hold the foundation of Christianity, though they build hay, wood, and stubble upon it, may be saved. This may help to enlarge our charity. We should not reprobate men for their *weakness* ; for nothing will damn men but *wickedness*. He shall be saved, *yet so as by fire*, saved out of the fire. Himself shall be snatched out of that flame, which will consume his work. It intimates, that it will be difficult for those that corrupt and deprave Christianity, to be saved. God will have no mercy on their works, though he may pluck them as brands out of the burning. On this passage of scripture the Papists found their doctrine of *Purgatory*, which is certainly hay and stubble : A doctrine never originally fetched from scripture, but invented in barbarous ages, to feed the avarice and ambition of the clergy, at their cost, who would rather part with their money than their lusts, for the salvation of their souls. It can have no countenance from this text, (1.) Because this is plainly meant of a figurative fire, not of a real one : For what real fire can consume religious rites or doctrines ? (2.) Because this fire is to *try mens works of what sort they are* ; but purgatory fire is not for trial, not to bring mens actions to the test, but to punish for them. They are supposed to be venial sins not satisfied for in this life, for which satisfaction must be made by suffering the fire of purgatory. (3.) Because this fire is to *try every man's works*, those of Paul and Apollos, as well as those of others. Now, no Papists will have the front to say, apostles must have passed through purgatory-fires.

16. Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you ? 17. If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy : for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.

Here the apostle resumes his argument and exhortation, founding it on his former allusion, *Ye are God's building*, ver. 9. and here, *Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you*. If any man defile, *i. e.* corrupt and destroy the temple of God, him shall God destroy, (the same word is in the original in both clauses) *for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are*. It looks from other parts of the epistle, where the apostles argues to the very same purpose ; see chap. vi. 13—20. as if the false teachers among the Corinthians were not only loose livers, but taught licentious doctrines, and what was particularly fitted to the taste of this lewd city on the head of fornication. Such doctrine was not to be reckoned among *hay and stubble*, that would be consumed whilst the person who laid them on the foundation escaped the burning ; for, it tended to corrupt, to pollute and destroy the church, which was a building erected for God, and consecrated to him, and therefore should be kept pure and holy. Those who spread principles of this sort, would provoke God to destroy them.

Note, Those who spread loose principles, that have a direct tendency to pollute the church of God, and render it unholy and unclean, are likely to bring destruction on themselves. It may be understood also as an argument against their discord and factious strifes ; division being the way to destruction : But what I have been mentioning seems to be the proper meaning of the passage. *Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you ?* It may be understood of the church of Corinth collectively, or of every single believer amongst them. Christian churches are temples of God. He dwells amongst them by his holy Spirit. *They are built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit*, Eph. ii. 22. Every Christian is a living temple of the living God : God dwelt in the Jewish temple, took possession of it and resided in it, by that glorious cloud that was the token of his presence with that people : So Christ by his Spirit dwells in all true believers. The temple was devoted and consecrated to God, and set apart from every common to an holy use, to the immediate service of God. So all Christians are separate from common uses, and set apart for God and his service. They are

are sacred to him. A very good argument this against all fleshly lusts, and all doctrines that give countenance to them. If we are the temples of God, we must do nothing that shall alienate ourselves from him, or corrupt and pollute ourselves, and thereby unfit ourselves for his use; and we must hearken to no doctrine nor doer, that would seduce us to any such practices. Note, Christians are holy by profession, and should be pure and clean, both in heart and conversation. We should heartily abhor, and carefully avoid, what will defile God's temple, and prostitute what ought to be sacred to him.

18. Let no man deceive himself: if any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. 19. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God: for it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. 20. And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.

Here he prescribes humility, and a modest opinion of themselves, for a remedy of the irregularities in the church of Corinth, the divisions and contests among them. *Let no Man deceive himself*, ver. 18. *i. e.* Do not be led away from the truth and simplicity of the gospel, by pretenders to science and eloquence, by a shew of deep learning, or a flourish of words, by rabbies, orators, or philosophers. Note, We are in great danger of deceiving ourselves, when we have too high an opinion of human wisdom and arts, plain and pure Christianity will be likely to be despised by those who can suit their doctrines to the corrupt taste of their hearers, and set them off with fine language, or support them with a shew of deep and strong reasoning. But *he who seems to be wise, must become a fool, that he may be wise*. He must be sensible of his own ignorance, and lament it, he must distrust his own understanding, and *not lean on it*. To have an high opinion of our own wisdom, is but to flatter ourselves; and self-flattery is the very next step to self-deceit. The way to true wisdom, is to sink our opinion of our own to a due level, and be willing to be taught of God: He must become a fool, who would be truly and thoroughly wise. The person who resigns his own understanding, that he may follow the instruction of God, is in the way to true and everlasting wisdom. *The meek will be guide in judgment, the meek will be teach his way*, Psal. xiv. 9. He that has a low opinion of his own knowledge and powers will submit to better information, such a person may be informed and improved by revelation: But the proud man, conceited of his own wisdom and understanding, will undertake to correct even divine wisdom itself, and prefer his own shallow reasonings to the revelations of infallible truth and wisdom. Note, We must abase ourselves before God, if we would either be truly wise or good. *For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God*, ver. 19. The wisdom which worldly men esteem, policy, philosophy, oratory, is *foolishness with God*. It is so in a way of comparison with his wisdom. *He chargeth his angels with folly*, Job iv. 18. and much more the wisest among the children of men. *His understanding is infinite*, Psal. cxlvii. 5. There can be no more comparison between his wisdom and ours, than between his power and being and ours. There is no common measure by which to compare finite and infinite. And much more is the wisdom of man foolishness with God, when in competition with his. How justly doth he despise, how easily can he baffle and confound it. *He taketh the wise in their own craftiness*. As it is written, *Job v. 13.* he catches them in their own nets, and entangles them in their own snares: He turns their most studied, and plausible, and promising, schemes against themselves; and ruins them by their own contrivance. Nay, *He knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain*, ver. 20 that they are vanity, *Psal. xciv. 11.* Note, That God has a perfect knowledge of the thoughts of men, the deepest thoughts of the wisest men, their most secret counsels and purposes: nothing is hidden from him, but *all things are naked and bare* before him, *Heb. iv. 13.* And he knows them to be vanity. The thoughts of the wisest men in the world have a great mixture of vanity, of weakness and folly in them; and before God their very wisest and best thoughts are very vanity, compared I mean with his thoughts of things: And should not all this teach us modesty, diffidence in our selves, and a deference to the wisdom of God; make us thankful for his revelations, and willing to be taught of God, and not be led away by glorious pretences to human wisdom and skill, from the simplicity of Christ, or a regard to his heavenly doctrine? Note, Who would be wise indeed must learn of God, and not set his own wisdom up in competition with God's.

21. Therefore let no man glory in men: for all things are yours: 22. Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; 23. And ye are Christs; and Christ is Gods.

Here the apostle founds an exhortation against over-valuing their teachers on what he had just said, and for that they had an

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equal interest in all their ministers. *Therefore let no man glory in men*, ver. 21. forget that their ministers are men, or pay that deference to them, as is due only to God; set them at the head of parties, have them in immoderate esteem and admiration, and servilely and implicitly follow their conduct, or submit to their dictates; and especially in contradiction to God, and the truths taught by his holy Spirit. Mankind are very apt to make the mercies of God cross their intentions. The ministry is a very useful and very gracious institution; and faithful ministers are a great blessing to any people; and yet the folly and weakness of people may do much mischief by what is in itself a blessing. They may fall into factions, side with particular ministers, and set them at their head, glory in their leaders, and be carried by them they know not whither. The only way to avoid this mischief, is to have a modest opinion of our selves, a due sense of the common weakness of human understanding, and an entire deference to the wisdom of God speaking in his word. Ministers are not to be set up in competition with one another. All faithful ministers are serving one Lord, and pursuing one purpose. They were appointed of Christ, for the common benefit of the church. *Paul and Apollos, and Cephas, are all yours*. One is not to be set up against another, but all are to be valued and used for your own spiritual benefit. Upon this occasion also he gives in an inventory of the church's possessions, the spiritual riches of a true believer: *All is yours*. Ministers of all ranks, ordinary and extraordinary. Nay, the world itself is yours. Not that saints are proprietors of the world, but it stands for their sake, they have as much of it as infinite wisdom sees to be fit for them, and they have all they have with the divine blessing. *Life is yours*, that you may have season and opportunity to prepare for the life of heaven; and *death is yours*, that you may go to the possession of it. It is the kind messenger that will fetch you to your Father's house. *Things present* are yours, for your support on the road. *Things to come* are yours, to enrich and regale you for ever at your journey's end. Note, That if we belong to Christ, and are true to him, all good belongs to us, and is sure to us. All is ours, time and eternity, earth and heaven, life and death. *We shall want no good thing*, Psal. lxxxiv. 11. But it must be remembered at the same time, that *we are Christ's*, the subjects of his kingdom, his property. He is Lord over us, and we must own his dominion, and cheerfully submit to his command, and yield ourselves to his pleasure, if we would have all things minister to our advantage. All things are ours, upon no other foot than our being Christ's. Out of him we are without just title or claim to any thing that is good. Note, They that would be safe for time, and happy to eternity, must be Christ's. *And Christ is God's*. He is the Christ of God, anointed of God, and commissioned by him, to bear the office of a Mediator, and to act therein for the purposes of his glory. Note, All things are the Believer's, that Christ might have honour in his great undertaking, and God in all might have the glory. God in Christ reconciling a sinful world to himself, and shedding abroad the riches of his grace on a reconciled world, is the sum and substance of the gospel.

C H A P. IV.

In this chapter the apostle (1.) Directs them, how to account of him and his fellow-ministers, and therein, tacitly at least, reproves them for their unworthy carriage towards him, 1—6. (2.) He cautions them against pride and self-elation, and hints at the many temptations they had to conceive too highly of themselves, and despise him, and other apostles, because of the great diversity in their circumstances and condition, 7—14. (3.) He challenges their regard to him as their Father in Christ, 15—17. (4.) He tells them of his having sent Timothy to them, and of his own purpose to come to them shortly, however some among them had pleased themselves, and grown vain upon the quite contrary expectation, 18, ad fin.

1. **L**ET a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. 2. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful. 3. But with me it is a very small thing, that I should be judged of you, or of mans judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. 4. For I know nothing by my self, yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord. 5. Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God. 6. And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to my self, and to Apollos for your sakes: that ye might learn in us not to think of men, above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another.

Here the apostle challenges the respect due to him, on account of his character and office, in which many among them, had at least very much failed. *Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God,* ver. 1. Though possibly others might have valued him too highly by setting him up as the head of a party, and professing to be his disciples. Note, In our opinion of ministers, as well as all other things, we should be careful to avoid extremes. Apostles themselves were, (1.) Not to be *over-valued*, for they were *ministers*, not *masters*; *stewards*, not *lords*. They were servants of Christ, and no more, though they were servants of the highest rank, that had the care of his household, that were to provide food for the rest, and appoint and direct their work. Note, It is a very great abuse of their power, and highly criminal in common ministers, to lord it over their fellow-servants, and challenge authority over their faith or practice. For even apostles were but servants of Christ, employed in his work, and sent on his errand, and dispensers of the mysteries of God, or those truths which had been hidden from the world in ages and generations past. They had no authority to propagate their own *fancies*, but to spread *Christian faith*. (2.) Apostles were not to be *undervalued*: For though they were ministers, they were ministers of Christ. The character and dignity of their Master puts an honour on them. Though they are but stewards, they are not stewards of the common things of the world, but of divine mysteries. They had a great trust, and for that reason had an honourable office. They were stewards of God's household, high-stewards in his kingdom of grace. They did not set up for masters, but they deserved respect and esteem in this honourable service. Especially,

(2.) When they did their duty in it, and approved themselves faithful. *It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful,* ver. 2. Trust-worthy. The stewards in Christ's family must appoint what he hath appointed: They must not set their fellow-servants to work for themselves: They must not require any thing from them without their Master's warrant: They must not feed them with the chaff of their own inventions, instead of the wholesome food of Christian doctrine and truth: They must teach what *he hath commanded*, and not *the doctrines and commandments of men*. They must be true to the interest of their Lord, and consult his honour. Note, The ministers of Christ should make it their hearty and continual endeavour to approve themselves trust-worthy; and when they have the testimony of a good conscience, and the approbation of their Master, they must slight the opinions and censures of their fellow-servants. *But with me, faith the apostle, it is a small thing, that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment,* ver. 3. Indeed reputation and esteem amongst men, is a good step towards usefulness in the ministry; and Paul's whole argument upon this head, shews he had a just concern for his own reputation. But he that would make it his chief endeavour to *please men*, would hardly approve himself a *faithful servant of Christ*, Gal. i. 10. He that would be faithful to Christ, must despise the censures of men, for his sake. He must look upon it as a very little thing, if his Lord approves him, what judgment men form of him. They may think very meanly, or very hardly, of him, whilst he is doing his duty; But it is not by their judgment he must stand or fall. And happy is it for faithful ministers, that they have a more just and candid judge, than their fellow-servants; one who knows and pities their imperfections, though he has none of his own. It is better to *fall into the hands of God, than into the hands of men*, 2 Sam. xxiv. 14. The best of men are too apt to judge rashly, and hardly, and unjustly; but his judgment is always according to truth. It is a comfort, men are not to be our final judges. Nay, we are not thus to judge ourselves. *Yea, I judge not myself: For though I know nothing by myself, cannot charge my self with unfaithfulness, yet am I not thereby justified,* this will not clear me of the charge: *But he that judgeth me is the Lord.* It is his judgment that must determine me: By his sentence I must abide. Such I am, as he shall find and judge me to be. Note, It is not judging well of our selves, justifying our selves, that will prove us safe and happy. Nothing will do this, but the acceptance and approbation of our sovereign judge. *Not he that commendeth himself is approved, but he whom the Lord commendeth,* 2 Cor. x. 18.

(3.) The apostle takes occasion from hence to caution the Corinthians against censoriousness, forward and severe judging of others. *Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come,* ver. 5. It is judging out of season, and judging at an adventure. He is not to be understood of judging by persons in authority, within the verge of their office; nor of private judging concerning facts that are notorious; but of judging persons future state, or the secret springs and principles of their actions, or about facts doubtful in themselves. To judge in these cases, and give decisive sentence, is to assume the seat of God, and challenge his prerogative. Note, How bold a sinner is the forward and severe censorer? How ill timed and arrogant are his censures? But there is one who will judge the censorer, and those he censures, without *prejudice, passion, or partiality*. And there is a time coming, when men cannot fail of judging right concerning themselves and others, by following his judgment. This should make them now cautious of judging others, and careful in judging themselves. There is a time coming, when *the Lord will bring to light the*

hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the hearts; deeds of darkness that are now done in secret, and all the secret inclinations, purposes, and intentions, of the *hidden man of the heart*. Note, There is a day coming that will lighten the darkness, and lay open the face of the deep, will fetch mens secret sins into open day, and discover the secrets of their hearts. *The day shall declare it.* The judge will bring these things to light. The Lord Jesus Christ will manifest the counsels of the heart, of all hearts. Note, The Lord Jesus Christ must have the knowledge of the counsels of the heart. Else he could not make them manifest. This is a divine prerogative, *Jer. xvii. 10.* And yet it is what our Saviour challenges to himself in a very peculiar manner, *Rev. ii. 23. All the churches shall know that I am HE which searcheth the reins and hearts, and will give to every one of you according to your works.* Note, We should be very careful how we censure others, when we have to do with a judge from whom we cannot conceal ourselves. Others do not lie open to our notice, but we lie all open to his: And when he comes to judge, *every man shall have praise of God.* Every man, that is, every one qualified for it, every one who has done well. Though none of God's servants can deserve any thing from him, though there be much that is blameable even in their best services, yet shall their fidelity be commended and crowned by him; and should they be condemned, reproached or vilified, by their fellow-servants, he will roll away all such unjust censures and reproaches, and shew them in their own amiable light. Note, Christians may well be patient under unjust censures, when they know such a day as this is coming, especially when they have their consciences testifying to their integrity: But how fearful should they be of loading any with reproaches now, whom their common judge shall hereafter commend.

(4.) The apostle here lets us into the reason why he had used his own name and Apollos in this discourse of his: He had done *it in a figure, and he had done it for their sakes.* He chose rather to mention his own name, and the name of a faithful fellow-labourer, than the names of any heads of factions amongst them, that hereby he might avoid what would provoke, and so procure his advice the greater regard. Note, Ministers should use prudence in their advices and admonitions, but especially in their *reproofs*, lest they lose their end. The advice the apostle would by this means inculcate, was, *that they might learn not to think of men above what is written, nor be puffed up for one against another,* ver. 6. not above what he had been writing. Apostles were not to be esteemed other than *planters or waterers in God's husbandry*, than *master-builders in his building*, than *stewards of his mysteries*, and *servants of Christ*. And common ministers cannot bear these characters, in the same sense that apostles did. Note, We must be very careful not to transfer the honour and authority of the master to his servant. *We must call no man master on earth, one is our master even Christ,* Matt. xxiii. 8, 10. We must not think of them above what is written. Note, The word of God is the best rule by which to judge concerning men. And again, judging rightly concerning men, and not judging more highly of them than is fit, is one way to prevent quarrels and contentions in the churches. Pride commonly lies at the bottom of these quarrels. Self-conceit contributes very much to our immoderate esteem of our teachers, as well as ourselves. Our commendation of our own taste and judgment, commonly goes along with our unreasonable applause, and always with a factious adherence to one teacher in opposition to others, that may be equally faithful and well qualified. But to think modestly of ourselves, and not *above what is written* of our teachers, is the most effectual means to prevent quarrels and contests, sidings and parties in the church. We shall not be puffed up for one against another, if we remember that they are all the instruments employed by God in his husbandry and building, and endowed by him with their various talents and qualifications.

7. For who maketh thee to differ *from another*? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive *it*, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received *it*? 8. Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us: and I would to God ye did reign, that we also might reign with you. 9. For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death. For we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men. 10. We *are* fools for Christ's sake, but ye *are* wise in Christ: we *are* weak, but ye *are* strong: ye *are* honourable, but we *are* despised. 11. Even unto this present hour, we both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place; 12. And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless: being persecuted, we suffer it: 13. Being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and *are* the off-scouring of all things unto this day.

Here the apostle improves the foregoing hint to a caution against pride and self-conceit, and sets forth the temptations the Corinthians had to despise him, from the difference of their circumstances.

1. He cautions against pride and self-conceit, by this consideration, that all the distinction made among them, was owing to God. *Who maketh thee to differ?* ver. 7. *And what hast thou that thou didst not receive?* Here the apostle turns his discourse to the ministers, who set themselves at the head of these factions, and did but too much encourage and abet the people in those feuds. What had they to glory in, when all their peculiar gifts were from God? They had received them, and could not glory in them as their own, without wronging God. At the same time as they reflected on them to feed their vanity, they should have considered them as so many debts and obligations to divine bounty and grace. But it may be taken as a general maxim. We have no reason to be proud of our attainments, enjoyments, or performances; all that we have, or are, or do, that is good, is owing to the free and rich grace of God. Boasting is for ever excluded. There is nothing we have, we can properly call our own; all is received from God. It is foolish in us therefore, and injurious to him to brag of it; they who receive all, should be proud of nothing, *Psal. cxv. 1.* Beggars and dependents may glory in their supports; but to glory in themselves, is to be proud at once of meanness, impotence, and want. Note, That due attention to our obligations to divine grace, would cure us of arrogance and self-conceit.

(2.) He presses the duty of humility upon them by a very smart irony, or at least reproves them for their pride and self-conceit. *Ye are full, ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us.* You have not only a sufficiency, but affluence of spiritual gifts; nay, you can make them the matter of your glory *without us*, that is, in mine absence, and without having any need of me. There is a very elegant gradation from sufficiency to wealth, and from thence to royalty; to intimate how much the Corinthians were elated, by the abundance of their wisdom and spiritual gifts; which was a humour prevailed among them, whilst the apostle was away from them, and made them forget what an interest he had in all. Note, How apt pride is to over-rate benefits, and overlook the benefactor; to swell upon its possessions, and forget from whom they come; nay, it is apt to behold them in a magnifying-glass. *You have reigned as kings*, saith the apostle, that is, in your own conceit; and *I would to God ye did reign, that we also might reign with you.* I wish you had as much of the true glory of a Christian church upon you, as you arrogate to yourselves: I should come in then for a share of the honour: *I should reign with you*: I should not be overlooked by you as now I am, but valued and regarded as a minister of Christ, and a very useful instrument among you. Note, Those do not commonly know themselves best, who think best of themselves, who have the highest opinion of themselves. The Corinthians might have reigned, and the apostle with them, if they had not been blown up with an imaginary royalty. Note, Pride is a great prejudice to our improvement. He is stopped from growing wiser or better, who thinks himself at the height; not only full, but rich, nay a king.

(3.) He comes to set forth his own, and the circumstances of the other apostles, and compares them with theirs. (1.) To set forth the case of the apostles. *For I think it hath pleased God to set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death.* *For we are made a spectacle to the world, and to angels, and to men.* Paul and his fellow-apostles were exposed to great hardships. Never were any men in this world so hunted and worried. They carried their lives in their hands. *God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death*, ver. 9. An allusion is made to some of the bloody spectacles in the *Roman amphitheatres*; where men were exposed to fight with wild beasts, or to cut one another to pieces, to make diversion for the populace; where the victor did not escape with his life, though he should destroy his adversary, but was only reserved for another combat, and must be devoured or cut in pieces at last. So that such wretched criminals (for they were ordinarily condemned persons that were thus exposed) might very properly be called *επιθνατοί*, persons devoted or appointed to death. They are said to be *set forth last*, because the meridian gladiators, those who combated one another in the after-part of the day, were most exposed, being obliged to fight naked. So that, as Seneca says, *epist. vii.* This was perfect butchery; and *those* exposed to beasts in the morning, were treated mercifully, in comparison of *these*. The general meaning is, that the apostles were exposed to continual danger of death, and that of the worst kinds in the faithful discharge of their office. God had set them forth, brought them into view, as the Roman emperors brought their combatants into the arena, the place of shew, though not for the same purposes. *They* did it to please the populace, and humour their own vanity, and sometimes a much worse principle. The apostles were shewn, to manifest the power of divine grace, to confirm the truth of their mission and doctrine, and propagate religion in the world. These were ends worthy of God; noble views, fit to animate them to the combat. But they had like difficulties to encounter, and were in a manner as much exposed, as these miserable Roman criminals. Note, The office of an

apostle was, as an honourable, so an hard and hazardous one. *For we are made a spectacle to the world, and to angels, and men*, ver. 9. A *shew*, we are brought into the theatre, brought out to the publick view of the world. Angels and men are witnesses to our persecutions, sufferings, patience, and magnanimity. They all see that we suffer for our fidelity to Christ, and how we suffer; how great and imminent our dangers, and how bravely we encounter them; how sharp our sufferings, and how patiently we endure them, by the power of divine grace, and our Christian principles. Ours is hard work, but honourable; it is hazardous, but glorious. God will have honour from us, religion will be credited by us. The world cannot but see and wonder at our undaunted resolution, our invincible patience and constancy. And how contentedly could they be exposed, both to sufferings and scorn, for the honour of their Master! Note, The faithful ministers and disciples of Christ, should contentedly undergo any thing, for his sake and honour. (2.) He compares his own case with that of the Corinthians. *We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ: We are weak, but ye are strong: Ye are honourable, but we are despised*, ver. 11. *We are fools for Christ's sake.* Such in common account, and we are well content to be so accounted. We can pass for fools in the world, and be despised as such; so the wisdom of God, and the honour of the gospel, be by this means secured and displayed. Note, Faithful ministers can bear being despised, so that the wisdom of God, and the power of his grace be thereby displayed. *But ye are wise in Christ.* You have the same of being wise and learned Christians, and you do not a little value yourselves upon it. We are under disgrace for delivering the plain truths of the gospel, and in as plain a manner: You are in reputation for your eloquence and human wisdom, which amongst many make you pass for wise men in Christ. *We are weak, but ye are strong.* We are suffering for Christ's sake, so being weak plainly signifies, *2 Cor. xii. 10.* when you are in easy and flourishing circumstances. Note, All Christians are not alike exposed. Some suffer greater hardships than others, who are yet engaged in the same warfare. The standard-bearers in an army are most struck at. So ministers in a time of persecution are commonly the first and greatest sufferers. Or else, we pass upon the world for persons of but mean endowments, very striplings in Christianity; but you look upon yourselves, and are looked upon by others, as men, as those of a much more advanced growth, and confirmed strength. Note, They are not always the greatest proficients in Christianity, who think thus of themselves, or pass for such upon others. It is but too easy and common for self-love to commit such a mistake. Corinthians may think themselves, and be esteemed by others, as wiser and stronger men in Christ than apostles themselves. But oh! How gross is the mistake!

(4.) He enters into some particularities of their sufferings. *Even to this present hour*, that is, after all the service we have been doing among you, and other churches, *We both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place, and labour working with our own hands*, ver. 11, 12. *Nay, we were made as the filth of the world, and off-scouring of all things*, ver. 13. They were forced to labour with their own hands to get subsistence, and had so much, and so much greater business to mind, that they could not attend enough to this, to get a comfortable livelihood, but were exposed to hunger, thirst, and nakedness. Many times wanted both meat, and drink, and clothes. They were driven about the world without having any fixed abode, any stated habitation. Poor circumstances indeed, for the prime ministers of our Saviour's kingdom, to have no home or home, and to be destitute of food and raiment! But yet no poorer than his, *who had not where to lay his head*, Luke ix. 58. *Nay*, oh glorious charity and devotion, that would carry them through all these hardships! How ardently did they love God, how vehemently did they thirst for the salvation of souls! There was voluntary, it was pleasing poverty. They thought they had a rich amends for all the outward good things they wanted, if they might but serve Christ, and save souls. *Nay*, though they were *made the filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things*. They were treated as men not fit to live, *μεταδραματι*. It is reasonably thought by the critics, that an allusion is here made to a common custom of many Heathen nations, to offer men in sacrifice in a time of pestilence or other like grievous calamity. These were ordinarily the vilest of men, persons of the lowest rank and worst character. Thus in the first ages, Christians were counted the source of all publick calamities, and were sacrificed to the peoples rage, if not to appease their angry deities. And apostles could not meet with better usage. They suffered in their persons and characters as the very worst and vilest men; as the most proper to make such a sacrifice: Or else as the very dirt of the world, that was to be swept away. *Nay*, as *the off-scouring of all things*, the dross, the filings of all things. They were the common-sewer into which all the reproaches of the world were to be poured. To be the off-scouring of any thing, is bad; but what is it to be the off-scouring of all things? How much did the apostles resemble their Master, *and fill up that which was behind of his afflictions, for his body's sake, which is the church?* Col. i. 24. They suffered for him, and they suffered after his example. Thus poor and despised was he in his life and ministry.

And

And every one who would be faithful in Christ Jesus, must prepare for the same poverty and contempt. Note, They may be very dear to God, and honourable in his esteem, whom men may think unworthy to live, and use and scorn as the very dirt and refuse of the world. *God seeth not as man seeth*, 1 Sam. xvi. 1.

(5.) We have here the apostles behaviour under all; and the return they made for this mal-treatment. *Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we intreat*, ver. 12, 13. They returned blessings for reproaches, and entreaties and kind exhortations for the rudest slanders and defamations; and under the sharpest persecutions, carried it with patience. Note, The disciples of Christ, and especially his ministers, should hold fast their integrity, and keep a good conscience, whatever opposition or hardships they meet with from the world. Whatever they suffer from men, they must follow the example, and fulfil the will and precepts of their Lord. They must be content with him and for him, to be despised and abused.

14. I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you. 15. For though you have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. 16. Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me.

Here Paul challenges their regard to him as their father. He tells them, (1.) That what he had written was not for their reproach but admonition; not with the gall of an enemy, but the bowels of a father, ver. 14. *I write not to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn you*. Note, In reproof for sin, we should have a tender regard to the reputation, as well as the reformation of the sinner. We should aim to distinguish between them and their sins, and take care not to discover any spite against them ourselves, nor expose them to contempt and reproach in the world. Reproofs that expose, commonly do but exasperate, when those that kindly and affectionately warn, are likely to reform. When the affections of a father mingle with the admonitions of a minister, it is to be hoped they may at once melt and mend: But to lash like an enemy or executioner, will provoke and render obstinate. To expose to too open shame, is but the way to render shameless. (2.) He shews them upon what foundation he claimed paternal relation to them, and calls them his sons. They might have other pedagogues, instructors, but he was their father; *For in Christ Jesus he had begotten them by the gospel*, ver. 15. They were made Christians by his ministry. He had laid the foundation of a church among them. Others could only build upon it. Whatever other teachers they had, he was their spiritual father. He first brought them off from Pagan idolatry to the faith of the gospel, and the worship of the true and living God. He was the instrument of their new birth, and therefore claimed the relation of a father to them, and felt the bowels of a father towards them. Note, There commonly is, and always ought to be, an endeared affection between faithful ministers, and those they beget in Christ Jesus, through the gospel. They should love like parents and children. (3.) We have here the special advice he urges on them. *Wherefore I beseech you, be followers of me*, ver. 16. This he elsewhere explains and limits, chap. xi. ver. 1. *Be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ*. Follow me as far as I follow Christ. Come up as close as you can to my example, in those instances wherein I endeavour to copy after his pattern. Be my disciples, as far as I manifest myself to be a faithful minister and disciple of Christ, and no farther. "I would not have you be my disciples, but his. But I hope I have approved myself a faithful steward of the mysteries of Christ, and a faithful servant of my master Christ; so far follow me, and tread in my steps." Note, Ministers should so live, as that their people may take pattern from them, and live after their copy. They should guide them by their *lives* as well as their *lips*; go before them in the way to heaven, and not content themselves with pointing it out. Note, That as ministers are to set a pattern, others must take it. They should follow them, as far as they are satisfied they follow Christ in faith and practice.

17. For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church. 18. Now some are puffed up as though I would not come to you. 19. But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will, and will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power. 20. For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power. 21. What will ye? shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and in the spirit of meekness?

Here he tells them, (1.) Of his having sent Timothy to them, to bring them into remembrance of his ways in Christ, as he taught

every where in every church, ver. 17. to mind them of his ways in Christ; to refresh their memory as to his preaching and practice, what he taught, and how he lived among them. Note, They who have had never so good teaching, are apt to forget, and need to have their memories refreshed. The same truth taught over again, if it give no new light, may make new and quicker impression. He also lets them know, that *his teaching was the same every where, and in every church*. He had not one doctrine for one place and people, and another for a different one. He kept close to his instructions: *What he received of the Lord, that he delivered*, chap. xi. 23. This was the gospel revelation, which was the equal concern of all men, and did not vary from itself. He therefore taught the same things in every church, and lived after the same manner in all times and places. Note, The truth of Christ is one and invariable. What one apostle taught, every one taught. What one apostle taught at one time, and in one place, he taught at all times, and in all places. Christians may mistake and differ in their apprehensions, but Christ and Christian truth is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, Heb. xiii. 8. To render their regard to Timothy the greater, he gives them his character. He was *his beloved son* a spiritual child of his as well as themselves. Note, Spiritual brotherhood should engage affection as well as what is common and natural. The children of one father should have one heart. But he adds, he was *faithful in the Lord*. Trust-worthy, as one that feared the Lord. He will be faithful in that particular office he has now received of the Lord, the particular errand on which he comes; not only from me, but from Christ. He knows what I have taught, and what my conversation has been in all places, and you may depend upon it he will make a faithful report. Note, It is a great commendation of any minister, that he is faithful in the Lord, faithful to his soul, to his light, to his trust from God; and must go a great way in procuring regard to his message, with them that fear God.

(2.) He rebukes the vanity of those who imagined he would not come to them, by letting them know, this was his purpose, though he had sent Timothy: *I will come to you shortly*, though some of you are so vain as to think I will not. But he adds, *if the Lord will*. It seems, as to the common events of life, apostles knew no more than other men, nor were they in these points under inspiration. For had the apostles certainly known the mind of God in this matter, he had not expressed himself with this uncertainty. But he sets a good example to us in it. Note, All our purposes must be formed with a dependence on providence, and a reserve for the over-ruling purposes of God. *If the Lord will, we shall live and do this and that*, Jam. iv. 15.

(3.) He lets them know what would follow upon his coming to them. *I will know, not the speech of them that are puffed up, but the power*, ver. 19. He would bring the great pretenders among them to a trial, know what they were; not by the rhetoric or philosophy, but the authority and efficacy of what they taught, whether they could confirm it by miraculous operations, and whether it were accompanied with divine influences and saving effects on the minds of men. For, adds he, *the kingdom of God is not in words, but in power*. It is not set up, nor propagated, nor established in the hearts of men, by plausible reasonings or florid discourses, but by the external power of the holy Spirit in miraculous operations at first, and the powerful influence of divine truth on the minds and manners of men. Note, It is a good way in the general to judge of a preacher's doctrine, to see whether the effects of it upon mens hearts be truly divine. That is most likely to come from God, which in its own nature is most fit, and in event is found to produce most likeness to God; to spread piety and virtue, to change mens hearts, and mend their manners.

(4.) He puts it to their choice, how he should come amongst them, *whether with a rod, or in love and the spirit of meekness*, ver. 21. that is, according as they were, they would find him. If they continued perverse among themselves and with him, it would be necessary to come with a rod; that is, to exert his apostolical power in chastising them, by making some examples, and inflicting some diseases and corporal punishments, or by other censures for their faults. Note, Stubborn offenders must be used with severity. In families, in Christian communities, paternal pity and tenderness, Christian love and compassion, will sometimes force to use the rod. But this is far from being desirable, if it may be prevented. And therefore the apostle adds, that it was in their own option, whether he should come with a rod, or in a quite different disposition and manner: *Or in love and the spirit of meekness*. As much as if he had said, "Take warning, cease your unchristian feuds, rectify the abuses among you, and return to your duty, and you shall find me as gentle and benign as you can wish. It will be a force upon inclination to proceed with severity. I had rather come and display the tenderness of a Father among you, than assert his authority. Do but your duty, and you have no reason to avoid my presence." Note, It is an happy temper in a minister to have the spirit of love and meekness predominant, and yet maintain his just authority.

CHAP. V.

In this chapter, the apostle (1.) Blames them for their indulgence in the case of the incestuous person, and orders him to be excommunicated and delivered to Satan, ver. 1—7. (2.) He exhorts them to Christian purity, by purging out the old leaven, ver. 7, 8. And (3.) Directs them to shun even the common conversation of Christians who were guilty of any notorious and flagitious wickedness, ver. 9, ad fin.

1. **I**T is reported commonly *that there is fornication among you, and such fornication, as is not so much as named amongst the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife.* 2. And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed, might be taken away from among you. 3. For I verily as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, *concerning him that hath so done this deed;* 4. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, 5. To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. 6. Your glorying is not good: Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?

Here the apostle states the case; and (1.) Lets them know what was the common or general report concerning them, That one of their community *was guilty of fornication*, ver. 1. It was told in all places to their dishonour and the reproach of Christians. And it was the more reproachful, because it could not be refuted. Note, The heinous sins of professed Christians are quickly noted and noised abroad. We should walk circumspectly, for many eyes are upon us, and many mouths will be opened against us, if we fall into any scandalous practice. But this was not a common instance of fornication, but *such as was not so much as named among the Gentiles, that a man should have his father's wife*; either marry her whilst his father was alive, or keep her as his concubine, either when he was dead, or whilst he was alive. In either of these cases, his criminal conversation with her might be called fornication; but had his father been dead, and he after his decease married to her, it had been incest still, but neither fornication nor adultery in the strictest sense. But to marry her, or keep her as a concubine, whilst his father was alive, though he had repudiated her, or she had deserted him, whether she were his own mother or not, was incestuous fornication. *Scelus incredibile*, as Cicero calls it, *et præter unum in omni vitâ inauditum*. Orat. pro Cluent. when a woman had caused her daughter to be put away, and was married to her husband. Incredible wickedness! says the Orator; such I never heard of in all my life besides. Not that there were no such instances of incestuous commerce or marriages among the heathens; but whenever they happened they gave a shock to every man of virtue and probity amongst them. They could not think of them without horror, nor mention them without dislike and detestation. Yet such a horrible wickedness was committed by one in the church of Corinth, and, as is probable, a leader of one of the factions amongst them; a principal man. Note, The best churches are in this state of imperfection, liable to very great corruptions. Is it any wonder, when so horrible a practice was tolerated in an apostolical church, a church planted by the great apostle of the Gentiles?

(2.) He greatly blames them for their own conduct hereupon. *They were puffed up*, ver. 2. *They gloried*, (1.) Perhaps on account of this very scandalous person. He might be a man of great eloquence, of deep science, and for this reason very greatly esteemed, and followed, and cried up by many amongst them. They were proud they had such a leader. Instead of mourning for his fall, and their own reproach upon his account, and renouncing him and removing him from the society, they continued to applaud him, and pride themselves in him. Note, Pride and self-esteem many times lie at the bottom of our immoderate esteem of others. And this makes us blind to their faults as to our own. It is true humility that will bring a man to a fight and acknowledgment of his errors. The proud man either wholly overlooks or artfully disguises his faults, or endeavours to transform his blemishes into beauties. Those of the Corinthians that were admirers of the incestuous person's gifts, could overlook or extenuate his horrid practices. Or else, (2.) It may intimate to us that some of the opposite party were *puffed up*. They were proud of their own standing, and trampled over him that fell. Note, It is a very wicked thing to glory over the miscarriages and sins of others. We should lay them to heart, and mourn for them, not be puffed up with them. Probably this was one effect of the divisions among them. The opposite party made their advantage of this scandalous lapse, and were glad of the opportunity. Note, It is a sad consequence of divisions among Christians, that

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it makes them apt to *rejoice in iniquity*. Others sins should be our sorrow. Nay churches should mourn for the scandalous behaviour of particular members, and if they are incorrigible, should remove them. He *that had done this wicked deed*, should have been taken away from among them.

(3.) We have the apostle's direction to them how they should now proceed with this scandalous sinner. He would have him excommunicated and delivered to Satan, ver. 3, 4, 5. *As absent in body, yet present in spirit, he had judged already as if he were present.* That is, he had by revelation and the miraculous gift of discerning vouchsafed him by the Spirit, as perfect a knowledge of the case, and had hereupon come to the following determination, not without special authority from the holy Spirit. He says this to let them know, that though he was at a distance, he did not pass an unrighteous sentence, nor judge without having as full cognizance of the case, as if he had been on the spot. Note, Those who would appear righteous judges to the world, will take care to inform them, they do not pass sentence without full proof and evidence. The apostle adds, *him who hath so done this deed*. The fact was not only heinously evil in itself, and horrible to the heathens, but there were some particular circumstances that greatly aggravated the offence. He had so committed the evil as to heighten the guilt by the manner of doing it. Perhaps he was a minister, a teacher, or a principal man amongst them. By this means the church and their profession were more reproached. Note, In dealing with scandalous sinners, not only are they to be charged with the fact, but the aggravating circumstances of it. He had judged that *he should be delivered to Satan*, ver. 5. and this was to be done *in the name of Christ*, and with the *power of Christ*, and in a full assembly, where the apostle would be also present in spirit, or by his spiritual gift of discerning at a distance. Some think that this is to be understood of a mere ordinary excommunication, and that delivering him to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, is only meant of disowning him, and casting him out of the church, that by this means he might be brought to repentance, and his flesh might be mortified. Christ and Satan divide the world: and they that live in sin, when they profess relation to Christ, belong to another master, and by excommunication should be delivered up to him. And this *in the name of Christ*. Note, Church censures are Christ's ordinances, and should be dispensed in his name. It was to be done also *when they were gathered together*; in full assembly. The more publick, the more solemn; and the more solemn, the more likely to have good effect on the offender. Note, Church-censures on notorious and incorrigible sinners, should be passed with great solemnity. They who sin in this manner, are *to be rebuked before all, that all may fear*, 1 Tim. v. 20. Others think the apostle is not to be understood of mere excommunication, but of a miraculous power or authority they had, of delivering a scandalous sinner into the power of Satan, to have bodily diseases inflicted, and to be tormented by him with bodily pains, which is their meaning of the *destruction of the flesh*. In this sense, the destruction of the flesh has been an happy occasion of the salvation of the spirit. It is probable this was a mixed case. It was an extraordinary instance: and the church was to proceed against him by just censure; and the apostle, when they did so, put forth an act of extraordinary power, and gave him up to Satan; not for his destruction, but deliverance, at least for the destruction of the flesh, that the soul might be saved. Note, That the great end of church censures is the good of those who fall under them; their spiritual and eternal good. It is that *their spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus*, ver. 5. Yet it is not merely a regard to their benefit that is to be had in proceeding against them. For,

(4.) He hints the danger of contagion from this example. Your glorying is not good: *Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump*. The bad example of a man in rank and reputation, is very mischievous; spreads the contagion far and wide. It did so probably in this very church and case: see 2 Cor. xii. 21. They could not be ignorant of this. The experience of the whole world was for it; *one scabbed sheep infects a whole flock*. A little leaven will quickly spread the ferment through a great lump. Note, Concern for their purity and preservation, should engage Christian churches to remove gross and scandalous sinners.

7. Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us. 8. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

Here the apostle exhorts them to purity, by purging out the old leaven. In which observe, (1.) The advice itself; addressed either, (1.) To the church in general. And so purging out the old leaven that they might be a new lump, refers to the *putting away from themselves that wicked person*, ver. 18. Note, Christian churches should be pure and holy, and not bear such corrupt

rupt and scandalous members. They are to be unleavened, and should endure no such heterogeneous mixture to sour and corrupt them. Or, (2.) To each particular member of the church. And so it implies, that they should purge themselves from all impurity of heart and life, especially from this kind of wickedness, to which the Corinthians were addicted to a proverb. See the *argument* at the beginning. This old leaven was in a particular manner to be purged out, that they might become a new lump. Note, Christians should be careful to keep themselves clean, as well as purge polluted members out of their society. And they should especially avoid the sins to which themselves were once most addicted, and the reigning vices of the places and people where they live. They were also to purge themselves from *malice and wickedness*; all ill-will and mischievous subtilty. This is leaven that sours the mind to a great degree. It is not improbable this was intended as a check to some, who gloried in the scandalous behaviour of the offender, both out of *pride* and *pique*. Note, Christians should be particularly careful to keep free from malice and mischief. Love is the very essence and life of Christian religion. It is the fairest image of God, for *God is love*, 1 John iv. 16. And therefore it is no wonder if it be the greatest beauty and ornament of a Christian. But malice is murder in its principles. *He that hates his brother, is a murderer*, 1 John iii. 15. bears the image, and proclaims himself the offspring of him, who *was a murderer from the beginning*, John viii. 44. How hateful should every thing be to a Christian that looks like malice and mischief. (2.) The reason with which this advice is enforced. *For Christ our passover is sacrificed for us*, ver. 7. This is the great doctrine of the gospel. The Jews after they had killed the passover, kept the feast of unleavened bread. So must we; not for seven days only, but all our days. We should die with our Saviour to sin: *Be planted into the likeness of his death*, by mortifying sin; and into the *likeness of his resurrection*, by rising again to *newness of life*, and that internal and external. We must have new hearts, and lead new lives. Note, The whole life of a Christian must be a feast of unleavened bread. His common conversation, and his religious performances must be holy. *He must purge out the old leaven, and keep the feast with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth*. He must be without guilt in his carriage towards God and man. And the more there is of sincerity in our own profession, the less shall we censure that of others. Note, on the whole, That the sacrifice of our Redeemer, is the strongest argument with a gracious heart, for purity and sincerity. How sincere a regard did he shew to our welfare, in dying for us! and how terrible a proof was his death, of the detestable nature of sin, and God's displeasure against it! Heinous evil, that could not be expiated but with the blood of the Son of God! And shall a Christian love the murderer of his Lord! God forbid.

9. I wrote unto you in an epistle, not to company with fornicators. 10. Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. 11. But now I have written unto you, not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, with such an one, no not to eat. 12. For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? 13. But them that are without, God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.

Here the apostle advises them to shun the company and converse of scandalous professors. In which consider,

(1.) The advice itself. *I wrote to you in a letter not to company with fornicators*, ver. 9. Some think this was an epistle written to them before, which is lost. Yet we have lost nothing by it, the Christian revelation being entire in those books of scripture which are come down to us: Which are all that were intended by God for the general use of Christians, or he could and would in his providence have preserved more of the writings of inspired men. Some think it is to be understood of this very epistle, that he had written this advice before he had full information of their whole case, but thought it needful now to be more particular. And therefore, on this occasion, he tells them, that if any man called a brother, any one professing Christianity, and being a member of a Christian church, were a *fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, &c.* that they should not *keep company with him, not so much as eat with such a one*. They were to avoid all familiarity with him. They were to have no commerce with him; but that they might shame him and bring him to repentance, must disclaim and shun him. Note, That Christians are to avoid the familiar conversation of fellow-Christians that are notoriously wicked, and under just censure for their flagitious practices. Such disgrace the Christian name. They may call themselves brethren in Christ, but they are not Christian brethren. They are only fit companions for

their *brethren in iniquity*; and to such company they should be left, till they *mend their ways and doings*.

(2.) He limits this advice. He does not forbid Christians the like commerce with scandalously wicked heathens. He does not forbid them eating or conversing with the *fornicators of this world*, &c. They know no better. They profess no better. The gods they serve, and the worship they render to many of them, countenance such wickedness. And *you must needs go out of the world*, if you will have no conversation with such men. Your Gentile neighbours are generally vicious and profane; and it is impossible, as long as you are in the world, and have any worldly business to do, but you must fall into their company. This cannot be wholly avoided. Note, Christians may and ought to testify more respect to loose worldlings than to loose Christians. This seems a paradox. Why should we shun the company of a profane or loose Christian, rather than that of a profane or loose heathen?

(3.) The reason of this limitation is here assigned. It is impossible the one should be avoided. Christians must have gone out of the world to avoid the company of loose heathens. But this was impossible, as long as they had business in the world. Whilst they are minding their duty, and doing their proper business, God can and will preserve them from contagion. Besides, they carry an antidote against the infection of their bad example, and are naturally upon the guard. They are apt to have an horror at their wicked practices. But the dread of sin wears off by familiar converse with wicked Christians. Our own safety and preservation is a reason of this difference. But besides, heathens were such as Christians had nothing to do to judge, and censure, and avoid upon a censure past. For *they are without*, ver. 12. Must be left to *God's judgment*, ver. 13. But as to members of the church, they are within, are professedly bound by the laws and rules of Christianity; and not only liable to the judgment of God, but to the censures of those who are set over them, and the fellow-members of the same body, when they transgress those rules. Every Christian is bound to judge them unfit for communion and familiar converse. They are to be punished, by having this mark of disgrace put upon them, that they may be ashamed, and, if possible, reclaimed thereby. And the more, because the sins of such much more dishonour God, than the sins of the openly wicked and profane can do. The church therefore is obliged to clear herself from all confederacy with them, or connivance at them, and to bear testimony against their wicked practices. Note, Though the church has nothing to do with *those without*, it must endeavour to keep clear of the guilt and reproach of *those within*.

(4.) He applies the argument to the case before him. *Therefore put away from among your selves that wicked person*, ver. 13. Cast him out of your fellowship, and avoid his conversation.

CHAP. VI.

In this chapter the apostle (1.) Reproves them for going to law with one another about small matters, and bringing the cause before heathen judges, ver. 1—8. (2.) He takes occasion hence to warn them against many gross sins to which they had been formerly addicted, ver. 9—12. (3.) And having cautioned them against the abuse of their liberty, he vehemently deborts them from fornication by various arguments, ver. 12, ad fin.

1. **D**ARE any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? 2. Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? 3. Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life? 4. If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church. 5. I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man amongst you? no not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? 6. But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. 7. Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law with one another: why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded? 8. Nay, you do wrong and defraud, and that your brethren.

Here the apostle reproves them for going to law with one another, before *heathen judges*, for little matters; and therein blames all *vexatious law-suits*. In the chapter before, he had directed them to punish heinous sins among themselves, by church-censures. Here he directs them to determine controversies with one another, by church-counsel and advice. Concerning which, ob-

(1.) The fault he blames them for, *It was going to law*. Not but that *the law is good, if a man use it lawfully*. But (1.) *Brother went to law with brother*, ver. 6. one member of the church with another. The near relation would not preserve peace and good understanding. The bonds of fraternal love were broken through. *And a brother offended, as Solomon saith, is harder to be won than a strong city*; their contentions are like the bars of a castle, *Prov. xviii. 19*. Note, Christians should not contend with one another, for they are brethren. This duly attended to, would prevent law-suits, and put an end to quarrels and litigations. (2.) They brought the matter before the heathen magistrates. *They went to law before the unjust, not before the saints*, ver. 1. brought the controversy before *unbelievers*, ver. 6. and did not compose it among themselves, Christians and saints, at least in profession. This tended much to the reproach of Christianity. It published at once their folly and unpeaceableness; whereas they pretended to be the children of wisdom, and the followers of the Lamb, the meek and lowly Jesus, the *Prince of peace*. And therefore, saith the apostle, *Dare any of you*, having a controversy with another, go to law, implead him, bring the matter to an hearing before the unjust? Note, Christians should not dare to do any thing that tends to the reproach of their Christian name and profession. (3.) Here is at least an intimation that they went to law for trivial matters; things of little value. For the apostle blames them, that they did not take wrong, rather than go to law, ver. 7. which must be understood of matters not very important. In matters of great damage to ourselves or families, we may use lawful means to right ourselves. We are not bound to sit down and suffer the injury tamely, without stirring for our own relief. But in matters of small consequence, better put up the wrong. Christians should be of a forgiving temper. And it is more for their ease and honour to suffer small injuries and inconveniences, than seem to be contentious.

(2.) He lays before them the *aggravations* of their fault. *Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?* ver. 2. *Shall judge angels*, ver. 3. and are they unworthy to judge the *smallest matters*; the things of this life? It was a dishonour to their Christian character, a forgetting their real dignity, as saints, for them to carry little matters about the things of life before *heathen* magistrates. When they were to judge the world, nay, to judge angels, it is unaccountable that they could not determine little controversies among one another. By judging the world, and angels, some think is to be understood, their being assessors to Christ in the great judgment-day; it being said of our Saviour's disciples, that they should at that day sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel, *Matth. xix. 28*. And elsewhere we read of our Lord's coming with ten thousand of his saints to execute judgment on all, &c. *Jude ver. 14, 15*. He will come to judgment with all his saints, *1 Thes. iii. 13*. They themselves are indeed to be judged; see *Matth. xxv. 31—41*. But they may first be acquitted, and then advanced to the bench, to approve and applaud the righteous judgment of Christ both on men and angels. And in no other sense can they be judges. They are not partners in the Lord's commission, but they have the honour to sit by, and see his proceeding against the wicked world, and approve it. Others understand this judging of the world to be meant, when the empire should become Christian. But it does not appear that the Corinthians had knowledge of the empire's becoming Christian; and if they had, in what sense could Christian emperors be said to judge angels? Others understand it of their condemning the world by their faith and practice, and casting out *evil angels* by miraculous power, which was not confined to the first ages, or to the apostles. The first sense seems to be most natural. And at the same time, it gives the utmost force to the argument. Shall Christians have the honour to sit with the sovereign Judge at the last day, whilst he passeth judgment on sinful men and evil angels, and are they not worthy to judge of the trifles about which you contend before *heathen* magistrates? Cannot they make up your mutual differences? Why must you bring them before *heathen* judges? When you are to judge them, is it fit to appeal to their judicature? Must you, about the affairs of this life, set them to judge who are of no esteem in the church? So some read, and perhaps most properly, ver. 4. *heathen* magistrates, ἐξ ἑθνικῶν, the things that are not, chap. i. 28. Must they be called in to judge in your controversies, of whom you ought to entertain so low an opinion? Is not this shameful? ver. 5. Some who read it as our translators, make it an ironical speech. If you have such controversies depending, set them to judge who are of least esteem among yourselves. The meanest of your own members are able sure to determine these disputes. Refer the matters in variance to any, rather than go to law about them before *heathen* judges. They are trifles not worth contending about, and may easily be decided, if you have first conquered your own spirits, and brought them into a true Christian temper. Bear and forbear, and the men of meanest skill among you may end your quarrels. I speak it to your shame, ver. 5. Note, It is a shame that little quarrels should grow to such an head among Christians, that they cannot be determined by arbitration of the brethren.

(3.) He puts them on a method to remedy this fault. And this twofold. (1.) By referring it to some to make it up. *Is it so that there is no wise man amongst you? No one able to judge between*

his brethren? ver. 5. You who value yourselves so much upon your wisdom and knowledge, who are so puffed up upon your extraordinary gifts and endowments: Is there none among you fit for this office? None that has wisdom enough to judge in these differences? Must brethren quarrel, and the *heathen* magistrate judge, in a church so famous as yours for knowledge and wisdom? It is a reproach to you, that quarrels should run so high, and none of your wise men interpose to prevent it. Note, Christians should never engage in law-suits, till all other remedies are tried in vain. Prudent Christians should prevent, if possible, their disputes, and not courts of judicature decide them, especially in matters of no great importance. (2.) By suffering wrong, rather than taking this method to right themselves. *It is utterly a fault among you to go to law in this matter*, it is a fault of one side always to go to law, except in a case where the title is indeed dubious, and there is a friendly agreement of both parties to refer it to the judgment of those learned in the law to decide it. And this is referring it, rather than contending about it, which is the thing the apostle here seems chiefly to condemn. *Should you not rather take wrong, rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?* Note, A Christian should rather put up a little injury, than tease himself, and provoke others by a litigious contest. The peace of his own mind, and the calm of his neighbourhood, is more worth than victory in such a contest, or reclaiming his own right; especially when the quarrel must be decided by those who are enemies to religion. But the apostle tells them, they were so far from bearing injuries, that they actually did wrong, and defrauded, and that their brethren. Note, It is utterly a fault to wrong and defraud any; but it is an aggravation of this fault to defraud our Christian brethren. The ties of mutual love ought to be stronger between them, than between others. And *love worketh no ill to his neighbour*, *Rom. xiii. 10*. Those who love the brotherhood, can never, under the influence of this principle, hurt or injure them.

9. Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, 10. Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. 11. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

Here he takes occasion to warn them against many heinous evils, to which they had been formerly addicted.

(1.) He puts it to them as a plain truth, of which they could not be ignorant, that such sinners should not inherit the kingdom of God. The meanest among them must know thus much, that *the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God*, ver. 9. shall not be owned as true members of his church on earth, nor admitted as glorious members of the church in heaven. All unrighteousness is sin, and all reigning sin, nay every actual sin committed deliberately, and not repented of, shuts out of the kingdom of heaven. He instances in several sorts of sins against the first and second commandments, as *idolaters*; against the seventh, as *adulterers, fornicators, effeminate, and sodomites*; against the eighth, as *thieves and extortioners*, that by force or fraud wrong their neighbours; against the ninth, as *revilers*; and against the tenth, as *covetous and drunkards*, as those who are in a fair way to break all the rest. Those who knew any thing of religion, must know heaven could never be intended for these. The scum of the earth are no ways fit to fill the heavenly mansions. They who do the devil's work can never receive God's wages, at least no other than *death, the just wages of sin*, *Rom. vi. 23*.

(2.) Yet he warns them against deceiving themselves. *Be not deceived*. Those who cannot but know the forementioned truth, are but too apt not to attend to it. Men are very much inclined to flatter themselves, that *God is such a one as themselves*; and that they may live in sin, and yet die in Christ; may lead the life of the *devil's children*, and yet go to heaven with the children of God. But this is all a gross cheat. Note, It is very much the concern of mankind, that they do not cheat themselves in the matters of their souls. We cannot hope to *sow to the flesh, and yet reap everlasting life*.

(3.) He puts them in mind what a change the gospel and grace of God had made in them. *Such were some of you*, ver. 11. such notorious sinners as he had been reckoning up. The Greek word is ταῦτα. *Such things* were some of you, very monsters rather than men. Note, Some that are eminently good after their conversion, have been as remarkably wicked before. *Quantum mutatus ab illo*. How glorious a change does grace make! It changes the vilest of men into saints, and the children of God. Such were some of you, but you are not what you were. *Ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified in the name of Christ, and by the Spirit of our God*. Note, The wickedness of men before conversion, is no bar to their regeneration and reconciliation to God. The blood of Christ, and the *washing of regeneration*, can purge away

all guilt and defilement. Here is a rhetorical change of the natural order. *Ye are sanctified, ye are justified.* Sanctification is mentioned before justification: and yet the name of Christ, by which we are justified, is placed before the Spirit of God, by whom we are sanctified. Our justification is owing to the merit of Christ, our sanctification to the operation of the Spirit. But both go together. Note, None are cleansed from the guilt of sin and reconciled to God through Christ, but those who are also sanctified by his Spirit. All who are made righteous in the sight of God, are made holy by the grace of God.

12. All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. 13. Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body. 14. And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power. 15. Know ye not, that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. 16. What, know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot, is one body? for two (saith he) shall be one flesh. 17. But he that is joined unto the Lord, is one spirit. 18. Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doth, is without the body: but he that committeth fornication, sinneth against his own body. 19. What, know ye not that your body is the temple of the holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? 20. For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are Gods.

The twelfth, and former part of the thirteenth verse, seem to relate to that early dispute among Christians about the distinction of meats, and yet to be prefatory to the caution that follows against fornication. The connexion seems plain enough, if we attend to the famous determination of the apostle, *Acts xv.* where the prohibition of certain food, was joined with that of fornication. Now some among the Corinthians seem to have imagined, that they were as much at liberty in the point of fornication as of meats, especially because it was not a sin condemned by the laws of their country. They were ready to say, even in the case of fornication, *all things are lawful for me.* This pernicious conceit St. Paul here sets himself to oppose: tells them that many things lawful in themselves, were not expedient at certain times, and under particular circumstances: and Christians should not barely consider what was in itself lawful to be done, but what was fit for them to do, considering their *profession, character, relations, and hopes.* And that they should be very careful, that by carrying this maxim too far, they were not brought into bondage, either to a crafty deceiver, or a carnal inclination. *All things are lawful for me,* saith he, *but I will not be brought into the power of any,* ver. 12. Even in lawful things, he would not be subject to the impositions of an usurped authority. So far was he from apprehending, that in the things of God, it was lawful for any power on earth to impose his own sentiments. Note, There is a liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, in which we must stand fast. But sure he would never carry this liberty so far, as to put himself into the power of any *bodily appetite.* Though all meats were supposed lawful, he would not become a glutton or a drunkard. And much less would he abuse the maxim of lawful liberty to countenance the sin of fornication, which though it might be allowed by the Corinthian laws, was a trespass upon the law of nature, and utterly unbecoming a Christian. He would not abuse this maxim about eating and drinking, to encourage any intemperance, or indulge a carnal appetite. *Though meats are for the belly, and the belly for meats,* ver. 13. Though the belly was made to receive food, and food was originally ordained to fill the belly, yet if it be not convenient for me, and much more if it be inconvenient and likely to enslave me, if I am in any danger of being subjected to my belly and appetite, I will abstain. *But God shall destroy both it and them;* at least, as to their mutual relation. There is a time coming, when the human body will need no farther recruits of food. Some of the ancients suppose, that it is to be understood of abolishing the belly, as well as the food. And that though the same body be raised at the great day, yet not with all the same members; some being utterly unnecessary in a future state, as the belly for instance, when the man is never to hunger, nor thirst, nor eat, nor drink more. But whether this be true or no, there is a time coming, when the need and use of food shall be abolished. Note, The expectation we have of being without bodily appetites in a future life, is a very good argument against being under their power in the present life. This seems to me the sense of the apostle's argument; and that this passage is plainly to be connected with his caution against fornication, though some make it a part of their former argument against lit-

igious law-suits, especially before heathen magistrates, and the enemies to true religion. These suppose, that the apostle argues, that though it may be lawful to claim our rights, yet it is not always expedient, and it is utterly unfit for Christians to put themselves into the power of infidel judges, lawyers, and solicitors on these accounts. But this connexion seems not so natural. The transition to his arguments against fornication, as I have laid it, seems very natural. *But the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body,* ver. 13. Meats and the belly are for one another: not so, fornication and the body. The body is not for fornication, but for the Lord. This is the first argument he uses against this sin, for which the heathen inhabitants of this city were infamous, and the converts to Christianity retained too favourable an opinion of it. It is making things to cross their intention and use. *The body is not for fornication,* it was never formed for any such use or purpose, *but for the Lord,* for the service and honour of God. It is to be an instrument of *righteousness to holiness,* Rom. vi. 19. And therefore is never to be made an instrument of uncleanness. It is to be a member of Christ, and therefore must not be made the member of an harlot, ver. 15. And *the Lord is for the body,* i. e. as some think, Christ is to be Lord of the body, to have property in it, and dominion over it, having assumed a body, and been made to partake of our nature, that he might be head of his church, and head over all things, *Heb. ii. 5, 18.* Note, We must take care, that we do not use what belongs to Christ, as if it were our own, and much less to his dishonour. Some understand this last passage, *the Lord is for the body,* i. e. for its resurrection and glorification, according to what follows, ver. 14. Which is a

Second argument against this sin, viz. the honour intended to be put on our bodies. *God hath both raised up our Lord, and will raise us up by his power,* ver. 14. by the power of him, who shall change our vile body, and make it like to his glorious body, by that power whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself, *Phil. iii. 21.* It is an honour done to the body, that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead, and it will be an honour to our bodies, that they will be raised. Let us not abuse those bodies by sin, and make them vile, which if they be kept pure, shall, notwithstanding their present vileness, be made like to *Christ's glorious body.* Note, The hopes of a resurrection to glory, should restrain Christians from dishonouring their bodies by fleshly lusts.

A third argument is the honour already put on them. *Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ?* ver. 15. If the soul be united to Christ by faith, the whole man is become a member of his *mystical body.* The body is in union with Christ, as well as the soul. How honourable is this to the Christian! His very flesh is a part of the mystical body of Christ. Note, It is good to know in what honourable relations we stand, that we may endeavour to become them. *But now,* saith the apostle, *shall I take the members of Christ, and make them members of an harlot? God forbid.* Or, *take away the members of Christ?* Were not this gross abuse, and the most notorious injury? Is it not dishonouring Christ, and dishonouring ourselves to the very last degree? What, make Christ's members the members of an harlot! prostitute them to so vile a use! The thought is to be abhorred. God forbid. *Know ye not, that he who is joined to an harlot, is one body,* viz. with her's? *For two,* saith he, *shall be one flesh.* *But he who is joined to the Lord, is one spirit,* ver. 16, 17. Nothing can stand in greater opposition to the honourable relations and alliances of a Christian man, than this sin. He is joined to the Lord in union with Christ, and made partaker, by faith, of his Spirit. One spirit lives, and breathes, and moves in the head and members. Christ and his faithful disciples are one, *John xvii. 21, 22.* *But he that is joined to an harlot is one body, for two shall be one flesh,* viz. by carnal conjunction, which was ordained of God, only to be in a married state. Now, shall one in so close union with Christ, as to be one spirit with him, yet be so united to an harlot, as to become one flesh with her? Is not this a vile attempt, to make an union between Christ and harlots? and can a greater indignity be offered to him, or ourselves? Can any thing be more inconsistent with our profession or relation? Note, The sin of fornication is a great injury in a Christian to his head and Lord, and a great reproach and blot on his profession. It is no wonder therefore, the apostle should say, *flee fornication,* ver. 18. avoid it, keep out of the reach of temptations to it, of provoking objects. Direct the eyes and mind to other things and thoughts. *Alia vitia pugnando, sola libido fugiendo vincitur.* Other vices may be conquered in fight, this only by flight, say many of the fathers.

A fourth argument is, that it is a sin against our own bodies. *Every sin that a man doth is without the body; he that committeth fornication, sinneth against his own body,* ver. 18. Every sin, i. e. every other sin, every external act of sin besides, is without the body. It is not so much an abuse of the body as of somewhat else, as wine by the drunkard, food by the glutton, &c. Nor doth it give the power of the body to another person. Nor doth it so much tend to the reproach of the body, and to render it vile. This sin is in a peculiar manner stiled *uncleanness*, pollution; because no sin has so much external turpitude in it, especially in a Christian.

Christian. He sinneth against his own body; he defiles it, he degrades it, makes it one with the body of that vile creature with whom he sinneth. He casts vile reproach on what his Redeemer has dignified to the last degree, by taking it into union with himself. Note, We should not make our present vile bodies more vile, by sinning against them. The

Fifth argument against this sin, is, that the bodies of Christians are the temples of the Holy Ghost, which is in them, and which they have of God, ver. 19. He that is joined to Christ is one Spirit. He is yielded up to him, and is consecrated thereby, and set apart for his use, and is hereupon possessed and occupied, and inhabited by his holy Spirit. This is the proper notion of a temple: A place where God dwells, and sacred to his use, by his own claim, and his creatures surrender. Such temples real Christians are, of the Holy Ghost. Must he not therefore be God? But the inference is plain, that hence we are not our own. We are yielded up to God, and possessed by and for God; nay, and this in virtue of a purchase made of us. *Ye are bought with a price.* In short, our bodies were made for God, they were purchased for him. If we are Christians indeed, they are yielded to him, and he inhabits and occupies them by his Spirit. So that our bodies are not our own, but his. And shall we defecate his temple, defile it, prostitute it, and offer it up to the use and service of an harlot! Horrid sacrilege! This is robbing God in the worst sense. Note, The temple of the Holy Ghost must be kept holy. Our bodies must be kept as his, whose they are, and fit for his use and residence.

(6.) Lastly, The apostle argues from the obligation we are under to glorify God, both with our body and spirit, which are his, ver. 20. He made both, he bought both, and therefore both belong to him, and should be used and employed for him; and therefore should not be defiled, alienated from him, and prostituted by us. No, they must be kept as vessels fitted for our Master's use. We must look upon our whole selves as holy to the Lord, and must use our bodies, as what belongs to him, and is sacred to his use and service. We are to honour him with our bodies and spirits, which are his: and therefore, sure, must abstain from fornication, and not only from the outward act, but from the adultery of the heart, as our Lord calls it, *Matt. v. 28.* Body and spirit are to be kept clean, that God may be honoured by both. But God is dishonoured, when either is defiled, by so beastly a sin. Therefore flee fornication, nay, and every sin. Use your bodies for the glory and service of their Lord and Master. Note, We are not proprietors of ourselves, nor have power over ourselves, and therefore should not use ourselves according to our own pleasure, but according to his will, and for his glory, *whose we are, and whom we should serve, Acts xxvii. 23.*

CHAP. VII.

In this chapter the apostle answers some cases proposed to him by the Corinthians about marriage. He, (1.) Shews them that marriage was appointed as a remedy against fornication, and therefore persons had better marry than burn, ver. 1—10. (2.) He gives direction to those who were married to continue together, though they might have an unbelieving relative, unless the unbeliever would part, in which case a Christian would not be in bondage, ver. 10—17. (3.) He shews them, that becoming Christians does not change their external state, and therefore advises every one to continue, in the general, in that state in which he was called, ver. 17—25. (4.) He advises them, by reason of the present distress, to keep themselves unmarried: Hints the shortness of time, and how they should improve it, so as to grow dead and indifferent to the comforts of the world; and shews them how worldly cares hinder their devotions, and distract them in the service of God, ver. 25—36. (5.) He directs them in the disposal of their virgins, ver. 36—39. (6.) And closes the chapter with advice to widows, how to dispose of themselves in that state, ver. 39, 40.

NOW concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: *It is good for a man not to touch a woman.* 2. Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. 3. Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. 4. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. 5. Defraud you not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give your selves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency. 6. But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment. 7. For I would that all men were even as I my self: but every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that. 8. I say there-
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fore to the unmarried and widows, *It is good for them if they abide even as I.* 9. But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn.

The apostle comes now as a faithful and skilful casuist, to answer some cases of conscience which the Corinthians had proposed to him. Those were things whereof they wrote to him, ver. 1. As the lips of ministers should keep knowledge, so the people should ask the law at their mouths. The apostle was as ready to resolve, as they were to propose their doubts.

In the former chapter he warns them to avoid fornication; here he gives some directions about marriage, the remedy God had appointed for it. He tells them in general, (1.) That it was good, in that juncture of time at least, to abstain from marriage altogether. *It is good for a man not to touch a woman; not to take her to wife.* By good here, not understanding what is so conformable to the mind and will of God, as if to do otherwise were sin: an extreme into which many of the antients have run, in favour of celibacy and virginity. Should the apostle be understood in this sense, he would contradict much of the rest of his discourse. But it is good, that is, either abstracting from circumstances, there are many things in which the state of celibacy hath the advantage above this marriage-state; or else at this juncture, by reason of the distresses of the Christian church, it would be a convenience for Christians to keep themselves single, provided they have the gift of continency, and at the same time can keep themselves chaste. The expression also may carry in it an intimation, that Christians must avoid all occasions of this sin, and flee all fleshly lusts, and incentives to them. Must neither look on, nor touch a woman, so as to provoke lustful inclinations. Yet,

(2.) He informs them that marriage, and the comforts and satisfactions of that state, are by divine wisdom prescribed, for preventing fornication, ver. 2. *Πορνείας, Fornications*, all sorts of lawless lust. To avoid these, *Let every man, saith he, have his own wife, and every woman her own husband.* That is, marry and confine themselves to their own mates. And when they are married, let each render the other due benevolence, ver. 3. *i. e.* consider the disposition and exigency of each other, and render conjugal duty, which is owing to each other. For as the apostle argues, ver. 4. in the married state neither person has power over their own body, but has delivered it into the power of the other. The wife her's into the power of the husband, the husband his into the power of the wife. Note, That polygamy, or the marriage of more persons than one, as well as adultery, must be a breach of marriage-covenants, and violation of the partner's rights. And therefore they should not defraud one another of the use of their bodies, nor any other of the comforts of the conjugal state, appointed of God for keeping the vessel in sanctification and honour, and preventing the lusts of uncleanness. Except it be with mutual consent, ver. 5. and for a time only, whilst they employ themselves in some extraordinary duties of religion, or give themselves to fasting and prayer. Note, Seasons of deep humiliation require abstinence from lawful pleasures. But this separation between husband and wife must not be for a continuance, lest they expose themselves to Satan's temptations, by reason of their incontinence, or inability to contain. Note, Persons expose themselves to great danger, by attempting to perform what is above their strength, and at the same time not bound upon them by any law of God. If they abstain from lawful enjoyments, they may be ensnared into unlawful ones. The remedies God hath provided against sinful inclinations are certainly best.

(3.) The apostle limits what he had said about every man's having his own wife, &c. ver. 2. *I speak this by permission, not of command.* He did not lay it as an injunction upon every man to marry without exception. Any man might marry. No law of God prohibited the thing: But, on the other hand, no law bound a man to marry, so that he sinned if he did not, I mean, unless his circumstances required it for the preventing the lusts of uncleanness. It was a thing in which men, by the laws of God, were in a great measure left at liberty. And therefore Paul did not bind every man to marry, though every man had an allowance. No, he could wish all men were as himself, ver. 7. that is, single, and capable of living continently in that state. There were several conveniences in it, which at that season, if not at others, made it more eligible in itself. Note, It is a mark of true goodness, to wish all men as happy as ourselves. But it did not answer the intentions of divine providence as well, for all men to have as much command of this appetite as Paul had. It was a gift vouchsafed to such persons, as infinite wisdom thought proper: *Every one hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that.* Natural constitutions vary, and where there may not be much difference in the constitution, different degrees of grace are vouchsafed, which may give some a greater victory over natural inclination than others. Note, The gifts of God, both in nature and grace, are variously distributed: Some have them after this manner, and some after that. Paul could wish all men were as himself, but all men cannot receive such a saying, save they to whom it is given, *Matt. xix. 11.*

(4.) He sums up his sense on this head, *ver. 9, 10. I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, to those in a state of virginity or widowhood, It is good for them if they abide even as I.* There are many conveniences, and especially at this juncture, in a single state, to render it preferable to a married one. It is convenient therefore, that the unmarried abide as I, which plainly implies that Paul was at that time unmarried. *But if they cannot contain, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn.* This is God's remedy for lust. The fire may be quenched by the means he has appointed. And marriage, with all its inconveniences, is much better than to burn with impure and lustful desires. *Marriage is honourable in all; but it is a duty to them who cannot contain, nor conquer those inclinations.*

10. And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband: 11. But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife. 12. But to the rest speak I, not the Lord, If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. 13. And the woman which hath a husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him. 14. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; else were your children unclean; but now are they holy. 15. But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace. 16. For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?

In this paragraph the apostle gives them direction in a case which must be very frequent in that age of the world, especially among the Jewish converts; I mean, whether they were to live with heathen relatives in a married state. Moses's law permitted divorce, and there was a famous instance in the Jewish state, when the people were obliged to put away their idolatrous wives, *Ezr. x. 3.* This might move a scruple in many minds, whether converts to Christianity were not bound to put away, or desert their mates, continuing infidels. Concerning this matter, the apostle here gives direction. And,

(1.) In general he tells them, that marriage, by Christ's command, is for life; and therefore those who are married must not think of separation. The wife must not depart from the husband, *ver. 10.* nor the husband put away his wife, *ver. 11.* This I command, saith the apostle, yet not I, but the Lord. Not that he commanded any thing of his own head, or upon his own authority. Whatever he commanded was the Lord's command; dictated by his Spirit, and enjoined by his authority. But his meaning is, that the Lord himself, with his own mouth, had forbidden such separations, *Matt. v. 32. — xix. 9. Mark x. 11. Luke xvi. 18.* Note, Man and wife cannot separate at pleasure, or dissolve when they will their matrimonial bonds and relation. They must not separate for any other cause than what Christ allows. And therefore the apostle advises, that if any woman had been separated, either by a voluntary act of her own, or by an act of her husband, she should continue unmarried, and seek reconciliation with her husband, that they might cohabit again. Note, Husbands and wives should not quarrel at all, or should be quickly reconciled. They are bound to each other for life. The divine law allows of no separation. They cannot throw off the burden, and therefore should set their shoulders to it, and endeavour to make it as light to each other as they can.

(2.) He brings the general advice home to the case of such as had an unbelieving mate, *ver. 12.* But to the rest speak I, not the Lord, i. e. the Lord had not so expressly spoken to this case, as to the former of divorce. It doth not mean, that the apostle spoke without authority from the Lord, or decided this case by his own wisdom, without the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. He closes this subject with a declaration to the contrary, *ver. 40.* I think also, that I have the Spirit of God. But having thus prefaced his advice, we may attend, (1.) To the advice itself; which is, that if an unbelieving husband or wife were pleased to dwell with a Christian relative, the other should not separate. The husband should not put away an unbelieving wife, nor the wife leave an unbelieving husband, *ver. 12, 13.* The Christian calling did not dissolve the marriage-covenant, but bind it the faster, by bringing it back to the original institution, limiting it to two persons, and binding them together for life. The believer is not by faith in Christ loosed from matrimonial bonds to an unbeliever, but is at once bound and made apt to be a better relative. But though a believing wife or husband should not separate from an unbelieving mate, yet if the unbelieving relative desert the believer, and no means can reconcile to a cohabitation, in such a case a brother or sister is not in bondage, *ver. 15.* not tied up to the unreasonable humour, and bound servilely to follow, or cleave to

the malicious deserter, or not bound to live unmarried, after all proper means for reconciliation have been tried, at least if the deserter contracts another marriage, or be guilty of adultery, which was a very easy supposition, because a very common instance among the heathen inhabitants of Corinth. In such a case the deserted person must be free to marry again, and it is granted on all hands. And some think, that such a malicious desertion is as much a dissolution of the marriage-covenant, as death itself. For how is it possible, that *the two shall be one flesh*, when the one is maliciously bent to part from, or put away the other? Indeed, the deserter seems still bound by the matrimonial contract, and therefore the apostle saith, *ver. 11.* That if the woman depart from her husband upon account of his infidelity, let her remain unmarried. But the deserted party seems to be left more at liberty, (I mean, supposing all the proper means have been used to reclaim the deserter, and other circumstances make it necessary) to marry another person. It does not seem reasonable they should be still bound, when it is rendered impossible to perform conjugal duties, or enjoy conjugal comforts, through the mere fault of their mate: In such a case marriage would be a state of servitude indeed. But whatever liberty be indulged Christians in such a case as this, they are not allowed, for the mere infidelity of an husband or wife, to separate; but if the unbeliever be willing they should continue in the relation, and cohabit as those who are thus related. This is the apostle's general direction. (2.) We have here the reasons of this advice, (1.) Because the relation or state is sanctified by the holiness of either party. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife by the husband, *ver. 14.* or, both been sanctified. The relation itself, and the conjugal use of each other, are sanctified to the believer. *To the pure all things are pure, Tit. i. 15.* Marriage is a divine institution, it is a compact for life, by God's appointment. Should converse and congress with unbelievers in that relation, defile the believer, or render him or her offensive to God, the ends of marriage would have been defeated, and the comforts of it, in a manner, destroyed, in the circumstances in which Christians then were. But the apostle tells them, that though they were yoked with unbelievers, yet, if themselves were holy, marriage was to them an holy state, and marriage-comforts, even with an unbelieving relative, were sanctified enjoyments. It was no more displeasing to God for them to continue to live as they did before, with their unbelieving, or heathen relation, than if they had become converts together. If one of the relatives were become holy, nothing of the duties or lawful comforts of the married state could defile them, and render them displeasing to God, though the other were an heathen. He is sanctified for the wife's sake. She is sanctified for the husband's sake. Both are one flesh. He is to be reputed clean, who is one flesh with her who is holy, and vice versa, *Else were your children unclean, but now are they holy, ver. 14.* That is, they would be heathen, out of the pale of the church, and covenant of God. They would not be of the holy seed, as the Jews are called, *Isa. vi. 13.* but common and unclean, in the same sense as heathens in general were stiled in the apostle's vision, *Acts x. 28.* this way of speaking is according to the dialect of the Jews. Among whom a child begot by parents yet heathens, was said to be begotten out of holiness; and a child begotten by parents made proselytes, is said to be begotten *intra sanctitatem*, within the holy inclosure. Thus Christians are called commonly saints, such they are by profession, separated to be a peculiar people of God, and as such distinguished from the world; and therefore the children born to Christians, though married to unbelievers, are not to be reckoned as part of the world, but of the church, an holy not a common and unclean seed. Continue therefore to live even with unbelieving relatives; for if you are holy the relation is so, the state is so, you may make an holy use even of an unbelieving relative in conjugal duties, and your seed will be holy too. What a comfort is this, where both relatives are believers! (2.) Another reason is, that God hath called Christians to peace, *ver. 15.* Christian religion obliges us to carry it peaceably in all relations, natural and civil. We are bound as much as in us lies, to live peaceably with all men, *Rom. xii. 18.* and therefore sure to promote the peace and comfort of our nearest relatives, those with whom we are one flesh, nay though they should be infidels. Note, It should be the labour and study of those who are married, to make each other as easy and happy as possible. (3.) A third reason is, that it is possible for the believing relative to be an instrument of the other's salvation, *ver. 16.* What knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? Note, It is the plain duty of those in so near a relation, to endeavour the salvation of their souls to whom they are related. Do not separate. There is other duty now called for. The conjugal relation calls for the most close and endeared affection; it is a contract for life. And should a Christian desert a mate, when an opportunity offers to give the most glorious proof of love? Stay, and labour heartily the conversion of thy relative. Endeavour to save a soul. Who knows but this may be the event? it is not impossible. And though there be no great probability, saving a soul is so good and glorious a service, that the bare possibility should put one on exerting one's self. Note, Mere possibility of success should be a sufficient motive with us to use our diligent endeavours for saving the souls of our rela-

relations. *What know I but I may save his soul?* should move me to attempt it.

17. But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk : and so ordain I in all churches. 18. Is any man called being circumcised? let him not become uncircumcised : is any called in uncircumcision? let him not become circumcised. 19. Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God. 20. Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called. 21. Art thou called *being* a servant? care not for it; but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather. 22. For he that is called in the Lord, *being* a servant, is the Lord's freeman : likewise also he that is called *being* free, is Christ's servant. 23. Ye are bought with a price, be not ye the servants of men. 24. Brethren, let every man wherein he is called, therein abide with God.

Here the apostle takes occasion to advise them, to continue in the state and condition in which Christianity found them, and they became converts to it. And here, (1.) He lays down this rule in general, *as God hath distributed to every one*. Note, Our states and circumstances in this world are distributions of divine providence. *This fixes the bounds of mens habitations*, and orders their steps. God setteth up and pulleth down. And again, *as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk*. Whatever his circumstance and condition was when he was converted to Christianity, let him abide therein, and suit his conversation to it. The rules of Christianity reach every condition. And in every state a man may live so, as to be a credit to it. Note, It is the duty of every Christian to suit his behaviour to his condition, and the rules of religion, to be content with his lot, and carry himself in his rank and place, as becomes a Christian. The apostle adds, that this was a general rule, to be observed at all times, and in all places. *So ordain I in all churches*.

(2.) He instances in particular cases, as (1.) That of *circumcision*. *Is any man called being circumcised? let him not be uncircumcised: Is any man called being uncircumcised? let him not become circumcised*. It matters not, whether a man be a Jew or Gentile, within the covenant of peculiarity made with Abraham, or without it. He who is converted being a Jew, has no need to give himself uneasiness upon that head, and wish himself uncircumcised. Nor is he who is converted from Gentilism, under an obligation to be circumcised : nor should he be concerned, because he wants that mark of distinction which did heretofore belong to the people of God. For as the apostle goes on, *circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commands of God*, ver. 19. In point of acceptance with God, it is rather here nor there whether men be circumcised or not. Note, It is practical religion, sincere obedience to the commands of God, on which the gospel lays stress. External observances without internal piety are as nothing. Therefore let every man abide in the calling, i. e. state, wherein he was called, ver. 20. (2.) That of *servitude and freedom*. It was common in that age of the world for many to be in a state of slavery, bought and sold for money, and so the property of those who purchased them. Now saith the apostle, *Art thou called being a servant? care not for it*. Be not over solicitous about it. It is neither inconsistent with thy duty, profession, or hopes, as a Christian. *Yet if thou mayest be made free, use it rather*, ver. 21. There are many conveniences in a state of freedom, above that of servitude : a man has more power over himself, and more command of his time, and is not under the controul of another lord. And therefore, liberty is the more eligible state. But mens outward condition does not let nor further the acceptance with God. For he that is called, *being a servant, is the Lord's freed man*, ἀπαλευμένος, *as he that is called being free, is the Lord's servant*. Though he be not discharged from his master's service, he is freed from the dominion and vassalage of sin. Though he be not enslaved to Christ, yet he is bound to yield himself up wholly to his pleasure and service; and yet that service is perfect freedom. Note, Our comfort and happiness depends on what we are to Christ, not what we are in the world. The goodness of our outward condition doth not discharge us from the duties of Christianity, nor the badness of it debar us from Christian privileges. He who is a slave, may yet be a Christian freeman; he who is a freeman, may yet be Christ's servant. He is bought with a price, and should not therefore be the servant of man. Not that he must quit the service of his master, or not take all proper measures to please him, this were to contradict the whole scope of the apostle's discourse. But he must not be so the servant of men, but that Christ's will must be obeyed, and regarded more than his master's. He hath paid a much dearer purchase for him, and hath a much fuller property in him. He is to be served and obeyed without limitation or reserve. Note, The servants of Christ should be at the absolute command of no other master besides himself, should serve no man, any farther

than is consistent with their duty to him. *No man can serve two masters*. Though some understand this passage of persons being bought out of slavery by the bounty and charity of fellow-Christians, and read the passage thus, *Have you been redeemed out of slavery with a price? do not again become enslaved, just as before he had advised, that if in slavery they had any prospect of being made free, they should chuse it rather*. This meaning the words will bear, but the other seems the more natural; see chap. vi. 20.

(3.) He sums up his advice. *Let every man wherein he is called, abide therein with God*, ver. 24. This is to be understood of the state wherein a man is converted to Christianity. No man should make his faith or religion, an argument to break through any natural or civil obligations. He should quietly and comfortably abide in the condition in which he is, and this he may well do when he may abide therein with God. Note, The special presence and favour of God is not limited to any outward condition or performance. He may enjoy it who is circumcised, and so may he who is uncircumcised. He that is bound may have it as well as he who is free. In this respect, *there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian nor Scythian, bond nor free*, Col. iii. 11. The favour of God is not bound.

25. Now concerning virgins, I have no commandment of the Lord : yet I give my judgment as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful. 26. I suppose therefore that this is good for the present distress, *I say*, that it is good for a man so to be. 27. Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife. 28. But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned : nevertheless, such shall have trouble in the flesh; but I spare you. 29. But this I say, brethren, the time is short. It remaineth that both they that have wives, be as though they had none; 30. And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they possessed not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; 31. And they that use this world, as not abusing it : for the fashion of this world passeth away. 32. But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried, careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord : 33. But he that is married, careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife. 34. There is difference also between a wife and a virgin : The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy, both in body and in spirit : but she that is married, careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband. 35. And this I speak for your own profit, not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is comely, and that you may attend upon the Lord without distraction.

The apostle here resumes his discourse, and gives directions to virgins how to act. Concerning which we may take notice,

(1.) Of the manner wherein he introduces them, *Now concerning virgins, I have no commandment of the Lord*, ver. 25. I have, no express and universal law delivered by the Lord himself concerning celibacy. But *I give my judgment, as one who hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful*, viz. in his apostleship. He acted faithfully, and therefore his direction was to be regarded as a rule of Christ. For he gave judgment as one who was a faithful apostle of Christ. Though Christ had before delivered no universal law about that matter, he now gives direction by an inspired apostle, one who had obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful. Note, Faithfulness in the ministry is owing to the grace and mercy of Christ. It is what Paul was ready to acknowledge upon all occasions. *I laboured more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me*, chap. xv. 10. And it is a great mercy they obtain from God who prove faithful in the ministry of his word, either ordinary or extraordinary.

(2.) The determination he gives : which, considering the present distress, was, that a state of celibacy was preferable. *It is good for a man so to be*, i. e. to be single. *I suppose*, saith the apostle, or it is my opinion. It is worded with modesty, but delivered notwithstanding with apostolical authority. It is not the mere opinion of a private man, but the very determination of the Spirit of God in an apostle, though it be thus spoken. And it was thus delivered, to give it the more weight. Those that were prejudiced against the apostle, might have rejected this advice, had it been given with a mere authoritative air. Note, Ministers do not lose their authority by prudent condescensions. They *must become all things to all men*, that they may do them the more good. *This is good*, saith he, *for the present distress*. Christians,

at the first planting their religion, were grievously persecuted. Their enemies were very bitter against them, and treated them very cruelly. They were continually liable to be tossed and hurried by persecution. This being the then state of things, he did not think it so advisable for Christians that were single, to change conditions. The married state would bring more care and cumber along with it, *ver. 33, 34.* and would therefore make persecution more terrible, and render them less able to bear it. Note, Christians in regulating their conduct, should not barely consider what is lawful in itself, but what may be expedient for them.

(3.) Notwithstanding he thus determines, he is very careful to satisfy them, that he does not condemn marriage in the gross, or declare it unlawful. And therefore though he says, if thou art loosed from a wife, in a single state, whether bachelor or widower, virgin or widow, *do not seek a wife, do not hastily change conditions*; yet he adds, *If thou art bound to a wife, do not seek to be loosed.* It is thy duty to continue in the married relation, and do the duties of it. And though such, if they were called to suffer persecution, would find peculiar difficulties in it; yet to avoid these difficulties, they must not cast off, or break through, the bonds of duty. Duty must be done, and God trusted with events. But to neglect duty, is the way to put ourselves out of divine protection. He adds therefore, *If thou marry, thou hast not sinned: or if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned; but such shall have trouble in the flesh.* Marrying is not in itself a sin, but marrying at that time, was likely to bring inconvenience upon them, and add to the calamities of the times; and therefore he thought it advisable and expedient, that such as could contain, should refrain from it. But adds, that he would not lay celibacy on them as a yoke, or by seeming to urge it too far, draw them into any snare. And therefore says, *But I spare you.* Note, How opposite in this the papist casuists are to the apostle Paul. They forbid many to marry, and entangle them with vows of celibacy, whether they can bear the yoke or no.

(4.) He takes this occasion to give general rules to all Christians, to carry themselves with an holy indifferency towards the world, and every thing in it. (1.) *As to relations.* They that had wives, must be as though they had none. That is, they must not set their hearts too much on the comforts of the relation. They must be as though they had none. They know not how soon they shall have none. This advice must be carried into every other relation. Those who have children should be as though they had none. They who were their comfort now, may prove their greatest cross. And soon may the flower of all comforts be cut down. (2.) *As to afflictions.* They that weep must be as though they wept not, i. e. We must not be dejected too much with any of our afflictions, nor indulge ourselves in the sorrow of the world; but keep up an holy joy in God, in the midst of all our troubles, so that even in sorrow the heart may be joyful, and the end of our grief may be gladness. *Weeping may endure for a night, but joy will come in the morning.* And if we can but get to heaven at last, all tears shall be wiped from our eyes. And the prospect of it now, should make us moderate our sorrows, and refrain our tears. (3.) *As to worldly enjoyments.* They that rejoice should be as though they rejoice not, i. e. They should not take too great complacency in any of their comforts. They must be moderate in their mirth, and sit loose to the enjoyments they most value. Here is *not their rest*, nor are these things their portion. And therefore their hearts should not be set on them, nor should they place their solace or satisfaction in them. (4.) *As to worldly traffick and employment,* They that buy, must be as though they possessed not. Those that prosper in trade, increase in wealth, and purchase estates, should hold these possessions, as though they held them not. It is but setting their hearts on that which is not, *Prov. xxiii. 5.* to do otherwise. Buying and possessing should not too much engage our minds. They hinder many people altogether from minding the better part. Purchasing land and trying oxen, kept the guests invited from the wedding-supper, *Luke xiv. 18, 19.* And when they do not altogether hinder men from minding their chief business, they do very much divert them from a close pursuit. They are most likely to run so as to obtain the prize, who ease their minds of all foreign cares and cumberance. (5.) *As to all worldly concerns.* They that use this world as not abusing it, *ver. 31.* The world may be used, but must not be abused. It is abused when it is not used to those purposes for which it is given, to honour God, and do good to men: When instead of being oil to the wheels of our obedience, it is made fuel to lust: When instead of being a servant, it is made our master, our idol, and hath that room in our affections, which should be reserved for God. And there is great danger of abusing it in all these respects, if our hearts are too much set upon it. We must keep the world as much as may be out of our hearts, that we may not abuse it when we have it in our hands.

The apostle enforces these advices with two reasons. (1.) *The time is short,* *ver. 29.* We have but little time to continue in this world: But a short season for possessing and enjoying worldly things; *καὶ ὅτι σύνεσθαι μένεται.* It is contracted, reduced to a narrow compass. It will soon be gone. It is just ready to be wrapped up in eternity, swallowed up of eternity. Therefore do not set your hearts on worldly enjoyments. Do not be overwhelmed with worldly cares and troubles. Possess what you must

shortly leave, without suffering yourselves to be possessed by it. Why should your hearts be much set on what you must quickly resign? (2.) *The fashion of the world passeth away,* *ver. 31.* *συνεσθαι μένεται,* the habit, figure, appearance of the world passeth away. It is daily changing countenance. It is in continual flux. It is not so much a world, as the appearance of one. All is shew; nothing solid in it: And yet it is transient shew too, and will be quickly gone. How proper and powerful an argument is this to enforce the former advice? How irrational is it to be affected with the images, the fading and transient images of a dream! *Surely man walketh in a vain shew,* *Psal. xxxix. 9.* in an image, amidst the faint and vanishing appearances of things. And should he be deeply affected, or grievously afflicted with such a scene?

(5.) He presses his general advice, by warning them against the embarrassment of worldly cares. *But I would have you without carefulness,* *ver. 3.* Indeed, to be careless is a fault. A wife concern about worldly interests is a duty. But to be careful, full of care, to have an anxious and perplexing care about them, is a sin. All that care which disquiets the mind and distracts it in the worship of God, is evil. For God must be attended upon without distraction, *ver. 35.* The whole mind should be engaged when God is worshipped. The work ceases whilst it diverts to any thing else, or is hurried and drawn hither and thither by foreign affairs and concerns. They who are engaged in divine worship, should attend to this very thing; should make it their whole business. But how is this possible, when the mind is swallowed up of the cares of this life? Note, It is the wisdom of a Christian, so to order his outward affairs, and chuse such a condition in life, as to be without distracting cares, that he may attend upon the Lord with a mind at leisure, and disengaged. This is the general maxim by which the apostle would have Christians govern themselves. In the application of it, Christian prudence must direct. That condition of life is best for every man which is best for his soul, and keeps him most clear of the cares and snares of the world. By this maxim the apostle solves the case put to him by the Corinthians, whether it were advisable to marry? To this he says, That by reason of the present distress, and it may be in general, to be sure at that time, when Christians were married to *infidels*, and perhaps under a necessity to do so if they married at all: I say, in these circumstances to continue unmarried, would be the way to free themselves from many cares and encumbrances, and allow them more vacation for the service of God. Ordinarily, the less care we have about the world, the more freedom we have for the service of God. Now, the married state at that time (if not at all times) did bring most worldly care along with it. *He that is married careth for the things of the world, that he may please his wife,* *ver. 33.* *And she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband.* But the unmarried man and woman mind the things of the Lord, that they may please the Lord, and be holy both in body and spirit, *ver. 32, 34.* Not but the married person may be holy both in body and spirit too. Celibacy is not in itself a state of greater purity and sanctity than marriage. But the unmarried would be able to make religion more their business at that juncture, because they would have less distraction from worldly cares. Marriage is that condition of life that brings care along with it, though at some times it brings more than others. It is the constant care of those, in that relation, to please each other, though this is more difficult to do at some seasons, and in some cases, than in others. At that season therefore the apostle advises, that those who were single should abstain from marriage, if they were under no necessity to change conditions. And where the same reason is plain at other times, the rule is as plain, and as fit to be observed. And the very same rule must determine persons for marriage, where there is the same reason, i. e. if in the unmarried state persons are likely to be more distracted in the service of God, than if they were married: which is a case supposable in many respects. This is the general rule which every one's discretion must apply to his own particular case: and by it should he endeavour to determine, whether it be for marriage, or against. That condition of life should be chosen by the Christian, in which it is most likely he shall have the best helps and the least hindrances in the service of God, and the affairs of his own salvation.

36. But if any man think that he behaveth himself uncomely toward his virgin, if she pass the flower of her age, and need so require, let him do what he will, he sinneth not: let them marry. 37. Nevertheless, he that standeth stedfast in his heart, having no necessity, but hath power over his own will, and hath so decreed in his heart, that he will keep his virgin, doth well. 38. So then, he that giveth her in marriage, doth well: but he that giveth her not in marriage, doth better.

In this passage the apostle is commonly supposed to give advice about the disposal of children in marriage, upon the foot of his former determination. In which view, the general meaning is plain. It was in that age, and those parts of the world, and especially

especially among the Jews, reckoned a disgrace for a woman to remain unmarried past a certain number of years. It gave a suspicion of somewhat that was not for her reputation. Now, says the apostle, if any man thinks he behaves unhandsonly towards his daughter, and that it is not for her credit to remain unmarried, when she is at full age, and that upon this foot it is needful to dispose of her in marriage, he may use his pleasure. It is no sin in him to dispose of her to a suitable mate. But if a man has determined in himself to keep her a virgin, and stands to this determination, and is under no necessity to dispose of her in marriage, but is at liberty, with her consent, to pursue his purpose, he doth well in keeping her a virgin. In short, he that giveth her in marriage does well, but he that keeps her single, if she can be easy and innocent in such a state, does what is better; that is, more convenient for her in the present state of things, if not at all times and seasons. Note, That children should be at the disposal of their parents, and not dispose of themselves in marriage. Yet note again, That parents should consult their childrens inclinations both to marriage in general, and to the person in particular, and not reckon they have uncontrollable power to do with them, and dictate to them, as they please. Note, thirdly, It is our duty not only to consider what is lawful, but in many cases at least, what is fit to be done, before we do it.

But I think the apostle is here continuing his former discourse, and advising unmarried persons, who are at their own disposal, what to do. The *man's virgin* being meant of his virginity. *ἡ δὲ ἑαυτῆς παρθένη*, seems to be rather meant of preserving his own virginity, than keeping his daughter a virgin; though it be altogether uncommon to use the word in this sense. Several other reasons may be seen in Locke and Whitby, by those who will consult them. And it was a common matter of reproach both among Jews and civilized heathens, for a man to continue single beyond such a term of years, though all did not agree in limiting the single life to the same term. The general meaning of the apostle is the same, that it was no sin to marry, if a man thought there was a necessity upon him to avoid popular reproach, much less to avoid the hurrying fervours of lust. But he that was in his own power, stood firm in his purpose, and found himself under no necessity to marry, would at that season, and in the circumstances of Christians at that time, at least, make a choice every way most for his own conveniency, ease, and advantage, as to his spiritual concerns. And it is highly expedient, if not a duty, for Christians to be guided by such a consideration.

39. The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth: but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord. 40. But she is happier if she so abide, after my judgment: and I think also that I have the Spirit of God.

The whole is here closed up with an advice to widows. As long as the husband liveth, the wife is bound by the law; confined to one husband, and bound to continue and cohabit with him. Note, The marriage-contract is for life. Death only can annul the bond. But the husband being dead, she is at liberty to marry whom she will. There is no limitation by God's law to be married only for such a number of times. It is certain, second marriages are not unlawful, from this passage; for then the widow could not be at liberty to marry whom she pleased, nor to marry a second time at all. But the apostle asserts she has such a liberty, when her husband is dead, only with a limitation that she marry in the Lord. In our choice of relations and change of conditions we should always have an eye to God. Note, Marriages are then only like to have God's blessing, when they are made in the Lord. When persons are guided by the fear of God, and the laws of God, and act in dependence on the providence of God, in the change and choice of a mate: When they can look up to God and sincerely seek his direction, and humbly hope for his blessing upon their conduct. But she is happier, saith the apostle, if she so abide; that is, continue a widow, in my judgment; and I think I have the Spirit of God, ver. 40. At this juncture at least, if not ordinarily, it will be much more for the peace and quiet of such, and give them less hindrance in the service of God, to continue unmarried. And this he tells them was by inspiration of the Spirit. Whatever your false apostles may think of me, I think, and have reason to know, that I have the Spirit of God. Note, Change of condition in marriage is so important a matter, that it ought not to be made but upon due deliberation, after careful consideration of circumstances, and upon very probable grounds at least, that it will be a change to advantage in our spiritual concerns.

C H A P. VIII.

The apostle in this chapter answers another case proposed to him by some of the Corinthians, about eating those things that had

been sacrificed to idols. (1.) He hints at the occasion of this case, and gives a caution against too high esteem of their knowledge, ver. 1—4. (2.) He asserts the vanity of idols, and the unity of Godhead, and the sole mediation of Christ between God and man, ver. 4—7. (3.) He tells them that upon supposition that it were lawful in itself to eat of things offered to idols, for that they themselves are nothing; yet regard must be had to the weakness of Christian brethren, and nothing done that would lay a stumbling-block before them, and occasion their sin and destruction, ver. 7, ad fin.

1. **N**OW as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth. 2. And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know. 3. But if any man love God, the same is known of him.

The apostle comes here to the case of things that had been offered to idols, concerning which some of them sought satisfaction. A case that was frequent in that age of Christianity, when the church of Christ was among the heathen, and the Israel of God must live among the Canaanites. For the understanding it the better, it must be observed, that it was a custom among the heathens to make feasts on their sacrifices; and not only to eat themselves, but invite their friends to partake with them. These were usually kept in the temple where the sacrifice was offered, vide ver. 10. and if any thing were left when the feast ended, it was usual to carry away a portion to their friends; what remained after all belonging to the priest, who sometimes sold it in the markets. See chap. x. ver. 25. Nay feasts, as Athenæus informs us, were always accounted among the heathen sacred and religious things, so that they were wont to sacrifice before all their feasts; and it was accounted a very profane thing amongst them, *ἄδυνα ἐσθῆαι*, to eat at their private tables any meat whereof they had not first sacrificed on such occasions.

In this circumstance of things, while Christians lived among idolaters, had many relations and friends that were such, with whom they must keep up acquaintance, and maintain good neighbourhood, and therefore have occasion to eat at their tables, what should they do, if any thing that had been sacrificed should be set before them? What if they should be invited to feast with them in their temples? It seems as if some of the Corinthians were got into an opinion, that even this might be done, because they knew an idol was nothing in the world, ver. 4. The apostle seems to answer more directly to the case, chap. x. And here to argue upon supposition of their being right in this thought, against their abuse of their liberty, to the prejudice of others, but plainly condemns such liberty in chap. x. The apostle introduces his discourse with some remarks about knowledge, that seem to carry in them a censure of such pretences to knowledge as I have mentioned. *We know*, saith the apostle, *that we all have knowledge*, ver. 1. q. d. You are not the only knowing persons who take such liberty; we who abstain, know as much as you of the vanity of idols, and that they are nothing; but we know too, that the liberty you take is very culpable, and that even lawful liberty must be used with charity, and not to the prejudice of weaker brethren. *Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth*, ver. 1. Note, The preference of charity to conceited knowledge. That is best which is fitted to do the greatest good. Knowledge, or at least an high conceit of it, is very apt to swell the mind, to fill it with wind, and so puff it up. This tends to no good to ourselves, but in many instances is much to the hurt of others. But true love and tender regard to our brethren, will put us upon consulting their interest, and acting as may be for their edification. Observe, (2.) That there is no more common evidence of ignorance, than a conceit of knowledge. *If any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know*. He that knows most, best understands his own ignorance, and the imperfection of human knowledge. He who imagines himself a knowing man, and is vain and conceited on this imagination, has reason to suspect that he knows nothing aright; *nothing as he ought to know it*. Note, It is one thing to know truth, and another to know it as we ought; so as duly to improve our knowledge. Much may be known, when nothing is known to any good purpose; where neither ourselves nor others are the better for our knowledge. And they who think they know any thing, and grow vain hereupon, are of all men most likely to make no good use of their knowledge. Neither themselves nor others are likely to be bettered by it. But, adds the apostle, *if any man love God, the same is known of God*. If any man love God, and is thereby influenced to love his neighbour, the same is known of God; that is, as some understand, is made by him to know, is taught of God. Note, They that love God, are most likely to be taught of God, and be made by him to know as they ought. Some understand, shall be approved of God. He will accept him, and have pleasure in him. Note, The charitable person is most likely to have God's favour. They who love God, and for his sake love their brethren, and seek their

their welfare, are likely to be beloved of God. And how much better is it to be approved of God, than to have a vain opinion of our selves!

4. As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that *there is none other God but one*. 5. For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many) 6. But to us *there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.*

In this passage he shews the vanity of idols. *As to the eating of things that have been sacrificed to idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world; or there is no idol in the world; or an idol can do nothing in the world.* For the form of expression in the original is elliptical. The meaning in the general is, that heathen idols have no divinity in them: And therefore in the Old Testament are commonly called *lies* and *vanities*, or *lying vanities*. They are mere imaginary gods, and many of them no better than imaginary beings; and have no power to pollute the creatures of God, and thereby render them unfit to be eaten by a child, or servant of God. *Every creature of God is good, if it be received with thanksgiving*, 1 Tim. iv. 4. And it is not in the power of the *vanities of the heathens* to change its nature. *And there is no other God but one.* Heathen idols are not gods, nor to be owned and respected as gods, for there is no other God but one. Note, The unity of the Godhead is a fundamental principle in Christianity, and in all right religion. The gods of the heathens must be nothing in the world, must have no divinity in them, nothing of real Godhead belonging to them; for *there is no other God but one*. Others may be called gods; *there be that are called gods in heaven and earth, gods many, and lords many.* But they are there falsely thus called. The heathens had many such, some in *heaven* and some on *earth*: Celestial deities that were of highest rank and repute amongst them; and terrestrial ones, men made into gods, that were to mediate for men with the former, and were deputed by them to preside over earthly affairs. These are called Baalim commonly in the scripture. They had gods of higher and lower degree; nay many in each order. *Gods many, and lords many.* But all titular deities and mediators; so called, but not such in truth. All their divinity and mediation were imaginary. For, (1.) *To us there is but one God*, saith the apostle, *the Father, of whom are all things, and we in or for him.* We Christians are better informed, we well know there is but one God the fountain of being, the author of all things, maker, preserver, and governour of the whole world, *of whom, and for whom, are all things.* Not one God to govern one part of mankind, or one rank and order of men, and another to govern another. One God made all, and therefore has power over all. All things are of him, and we and all things else are for him. Called the Father here, not in contradistinction to the other persons of the sacred Trinity, and to exclude them from the Godhead, but in contradistinction to all creatures that were made by God, and whose formation is attributed to each of these three, in other places of scripture, and not appropriated to the Father alone. God the Father, as *Fons & Fundamentum Trinitatis*, as the first person in the Godhead, and the original of the other, stands here for the Deity, which yet comprehends all three. The name God being sometimes in scripture ascribed to the Father, καὶ ἐξ ὁμοῦν, or by way of eminency, because he is *Fons & Principium Deitatis*, as Calvin observes, the fountain of the Deity in the other two, they having it by communication from him. So that there is but one God the Father, and yet the Son is God too, but is not another God. The Father with his Son and Spirit being the one God, but not without them, or so as to exclude them from the Godhead. (2.) *There is to us but one Lord*, one mediator between God and men, viz. Jesus Christ. Not many mediators, as the heathen imagined, but one only, by whom *all things were created, and do consist*, and to whom all our hope and happiness are owing. *The man Christ Jesus*; but a man in personal union with the divine Word, or God the Son. This very man hath God made both Lord and Christ, Acts ii. 36. Jesus Christ in his human nature and mediatorial state, has a delegated power: *a name given him, though above every name, that at his name every knee should bow, and every tongue confess that he is Lord.* And thus he is the only Lord and only Mediator that Christians acknowledge, the only person who comes between God and sinners, administers the world's affairs under God, and mediates for men with God. All the lords of this sort among heathens, are mere imaginary ones. Note, It is the great privilege of us Christians, that we know the true God, and true mediator between God and men: *The true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent*, John xvii. 3.

7. Howbeit *there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour, eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their*

conscience being weak, is defiled. 8. But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither if we eat, are we the better; neither if we eat not, are we the worse. 9. But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling-block to them that are weak. 10. For if any man see thee which had knowledge, sit at meat in the idols temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols: 11. And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? 12. But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. 13. Wherefore if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.

The apostle having granted, and indeed confirmed, the opinion of some among the Corinthians, that idols were nothing, proceeds now to shew them that their inference from this assumption was not just, viz. That therefore they might go into the idol temple, and eat of the sacrifices, and feast there with their heathen neighbours. He does not indeed here so much insist upon the unlawfulness of the thing in itself, as the mischief such freedom might do to weaker Christians, persons that had not the same measure of knowledge with these pretenders. And here he

(1.) Informs them, that every Christian man at that time was not so fully convinced and persuaded that an idol was nothing. *Howbeit there is not in every man this knowledge; for some with conscience of the idol, unto this hour, eat it as a thing offered unto an idol.* With conscience of the idol; that is, some confused veneration for it. Though they were converts to Christianity, and professed the true religion, they were not perfectly cured of the old leaven, but retained an unaccountable respect for the idols they had worshipped before. Note, Weak Christians may be ignorant, or have but a confused knowledge of the great and plainest truths. Such were those of the one God, and one Mediator. And yet some of those who were turned from heathenism to Christianity among the Corinthians, seem to have retained a veneration for their idols, utterly irreconcilable with those great principles; so as when an opportunity offered to eat things offered to idols, they did not abstain, to testify their abhorrence of idolatry, nor eat with a professed contempt of the idol, by declaring they looked upon it to be nothing; and *so their conscience being weak, was defiled*. i. e. they contracted guilt, they eat out of respect to the idol, with an imagination that it had something divine in it, and so committed idolatry; whereas the design of the gospel was to turn men from *dumb idols to the living God*. They were weak in their understanding, not thoroughly apprized of the vanity of idols; and whilst they eat what was sacrificed to them out of veneration for them, contracted the guilt of idolatry, and so greatly polluted themselves. This seems to be the sense of the place, though some understand it of weak Christians defiling themselves by eating what was offered to an idol, with an apprehension that thereby it became unclean, and made them so in a *moral sense* who should eat it: Every one not having a knowledge that the idol was nothing, and therefore that it could not render what was offered to it in this sense unclean. Note, We should be careful to do nothing that may occasion weak Christians to defile their consciences.

(2.) He tells them that mere eating or drinking had nothing in them virtuous or criminal, nothing that could make them better or worse, pleasing or displeasing to God. *Meat commendeth us not to God; for neither if we eat are we the better, nor if we eat not are we the worse*, ver. 8. It looks as if some of the Corinthians made a merit of their eating what had been offered to idols, and that in their very temples too, ver. 10. because it plainly shewed they thought the idols nothing. But eating or drinking are in themselves actions indifferent. It matters little what we eat. What goes into the man of this sort, neither purifies nor defiles. And flesh offered to idols, may in itself be as proper for food as any other, and the bare eating or forbearing to eat, has no virtue in it. Note, It is a gross mistake to think that distinction of food will make any distinction between men in God's account. Eating this food and forbearing that, hath nothing in it to recommend a person to God.

(3.) He cautions them against abusing their liberty, the liberty they thought they had in this matter. For that they mistook this matter, and had no allowance, to sit at meat in the idol's temple, seems plain from chap. x. ver. 20. &c. But the apostle argues here, that even upon supposition they had such power, they must be cautious how they use it, it might be a *stumbling-block to the weak*, ver. 9. it might occasion their falling into idolatrous actions, perhaps their falling off from Christianity, and revolting again to heathenism. If a man *see thee which hath knowledge*, hath superior understanding to his, and hereupon conceiteth, thou hast a liberty to set at meat, or feast in an idol's temple, because an idol, thou sayest, is nothing; shall not one who is less thoroughly informed in this matter, and thinks an idol something, be emboldened to eat what was offered to the idol, not as common food,

food, but sacrifice, and thereby be guilty of idolatry? Such an occasion of falling they should be careful of laying before their weak brethren, whatever liberty or power themselves had.

The apostle backs this caution with two considerations, (1.) The danger that might accrue to *weak brethren*, even those *weak brethren for whom Christ died*. We must deny ourselves even in what is lawful, rather than occasion their stumbling, and endanger their souls, *ver. 11. Through thy knowledge shall thy weak brother perish for whom Christ died*. Note, Those whom Christ hath redeemed with his most precious blood, should be very precious and dear to us. If he had such compassion as to die for them, that they might not perish, we should have as much compassion for them as to deny ourselves, for their sakes, in many instances, and not use our liberty to their hurt, to occasion their stumbling, or hazard their ruin. It is very little that man hath of the spirit of a redeemer, that had rather his brother did perish, than himself be abridged, in any respect, of his liberty. He that hath the Spirit of Christ in him, will love those whom Christ loved so as to die for them, and will study to promote their spiritual and eternal welfare, and shun every thing that shall unnecessarily grieve them, and much more every thing that is likely to occasion their stumbling, or falling into sin. (2.) The hurt done to them, Christ takes as done to himself. *When ye sin so against the weak brethren, and wound their consciences, ye sin against Christ*, *ver. 12*. Note, Injuries done to Christians, are injuries to Christ; especially to *babes in Christ*, to weak Christians; and most of all the involving them in guilt, wounding their consciences, is wounding him. He hath a particular care of the lambs of the flock. *He gathers them in his arm, and bears them in his bosom*, *Isa. xi. 11*. Strong Christians should be very careful to avoid what will offend weak ones, or lay a stumbling-block in their way. Shall we be void of compassion for them to whom Christ has shewn so much? Shall we sin against Christ, who suffered for us? Shall we set our selves to defeat his gracious designs, and help to ruin those whom he died to save?

(4) He enforces all with his own example, *ver. 13. Wherefore if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh whilst the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend*. He doth not say he will never eat more. This were to destroy himself, and to commit a heinous sin to prevent the sin and fall of a brother. Such evil must not be done, that good may come of it. But though it was necessary to eat, it was not necessary to eat flesh. And therefore, rather than occasion sin in a brother, he would abstain from it, as long as he lived. He had such a value for the soul of his brother, that he would willingly deny himself in a matter of liberty, and forbear any particular food, which he might have lawfully eaten, and might like to eat, rather than lay a stumbling-block in a weak brother's way, and occasion him to sin by following his example, without being clear in his mind whether it were lawful or no. Note, We should be very tender of doing any thing that may be an occasion of stumbling to others, though it may be innocent in itself. Liberty is valuable, but the weakness of a brother should induce, and sometimes bind, us to waive it. We must not rigorously claim or use our own rights, to the hurt and ruin of a brother's soul, and so to the injury of our Redeemer, who died for him. When it is certainly foreseen that my doing what I may forbear, will occasion a fellow-Christian to do what he ought to forbear, I shall offend, scandalize, or lay a stumbling-block in his way; which to do is a sin, however lawful the thing itself be which is done. And if we must be so careful not to occasion other mens sins, how careful should we be to avoid sin in ourselves? If we must not endanger other mens souls, how much should we be concerned not to destroy our own?

C H A P. IX.

In this chapter the apostle seems to answer some cavils against himself. (1.) He asserts his apostolical mission and authority, and gives in his success amongst them, as a testimony to it, *ver. 1—3*. (2.) He claims a right to subsist by his ministry, and defends it by several arguments from natural reason and the Mosaic law, and asserts it also to be a constitution of Christ, *ver. 3—15*. (3.) He shews that he had willingly waived this privilege and power, for their benefit, *ver. 15—20*. (4.) He instances in several other things, in which he had denied himself for the sake of other mens spiritual interest and salvation, *ver. 20—24*. And (5) Concludes this argument, by shewing what animated him to this course, even the prospect of an incorruptible crown, *ver. 24*, ad fin.

1. **A**M I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are not you my work in the Lord? 2. If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord.

Blessed Paul, in the work of his ministry, not only met with opposition from those *without*, but discouragements from those *within*. He was under reproach, false brethren questioned his

apostleship, and were very industrious to lessen his character, and sink his reputation; particularly here at Corinth, a place to which he had been instrumental of doing much good, and from which he had deserved well; and yet there were those among them, who upon these heads, created him great uneasiness. Note, It is no strange or new thing, for a minister to meet with very unkind returns for great good-will to a people, and diligent and successful services among them. Some among the Corinthians questioned, if they did not disown, his apostolical character. To their cavils he here answers, and in such a manner as to set forth himself as a remarkable example of that self-denial, for the good of others, which he had been recommending in the former chapter.

And, (1.) He asserts his apostolical mission and character. *Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?* To be a witness of his resurrection, was one great branch of the apostolical charge. Now, faith Paul, have not I seen the Lord, though not immediately after his resurrection, yet since his ascent? See *chap. iv. ver. 8. Am I not free? Have I not the same commission, and charge, and powers, with the other apostles? What respect, or honour, or subsistence can they challenge, which I am not at liberty to demand as well as they? It was not because he had no right to live of the gospel, that he maintained himself with his own hands, but for other reasons.*

(2.) He offers the success of his ministry among them, and the good he had done to them, as a proof of his apostleship. *Are not ye my work in the Lord?* Through the blessing of Christ on my labours, have I not raised a church amongst you? *The seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord*. Your conversion by my means, is a confirmation from God of my mission. Note, The ministers of Christ should not think it strange, to be put upon the proof of their ministry by some, who have had experimental evidence of the power of it, and the presence of God with it.

(3.) He justly upbraids the Corinthians with their disrespect. *Doubtless, if I am not an apostle to others, I am so to you*, *ver. 2*. I have laboured so long, and with so much success among you, that you, above all others, should own and honour my character, and not call it in question. Note, It is no new thing for faithful ministers to meet with the worst treatment, where they might expect the best. This church of Corinth had as much reason to believe, and as little reason to question, his apostolical mission, as any. They had as much reason, perhaps more than any church, to pay him respect. He had been instrumental to bring them to the knowledge and faith of Christ. He laboured long amongst them, near two years, and he laboured to good purpose, *God having much people among them*; see *Acts xviii. 10, 11*. It was an aggravated ingratitude for this people to call in question his authority.

3. Mine answer to them that do examine me, is this, 4. Have we not power to eat and to drink? 5. Have we not power to lead about a sister a wife as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas? 6. Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working? 7. Who goeth a warfare at any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? 8. Say I these things as a man? or faith not the law the same also? 9. For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? 10. Or faith he it altogether for our sakes? for our sakes, no doubt, *this* is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope, should be partaker of his hope. 11. If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? 12. If others be partakers of *this* power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless, we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ. 13. Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things, live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar, are partakers with the altar? 14. Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they which preach the gospel, should live of the gospel.

Having asserted his apostolical authority, he proceeds to claim the rights belonging to his office, especially that of being maintained by it. These he (1.) States, *ver. 3, 4, 5, 6. Mine answer to them that do examine me, i. e. enquire into my authority, or the reasons of my conduct, if I am an apostle, is this. Have we not power to eat and drink, ver. 4. or a right to a maintenance? Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas? And not only to be maintained ourselves, but have them maintained also. Though Paul was at that time single, he had a right to take a wife when he pleased, and to lead her about with him, and expect a maintenance*

tenance for her, as well as himself, from the churches. Perhaps Barnabas had a wife, as the other apostles certainly had, and led them about with them. For that a wife is here to be understood by the *sister-woman*, ἀδελφὴν γυναῖκα, is plain from hence, that it would have been utterly unfit for the apostles to have carried about women with them, unless they were wives. The word implies, that they had power over them, and could require their attendance on them, which none could have over any, but wives or servants. Now the apostles, who worked for their bread, do not seem to have been in a capacity to buy, or hire, servants, to carry with them. Not to observe, that it would have raised suspicions to have carried about even women-servants, and much more other women to whom they were not married, for which the apostles would never give any occasion. The apostle therefore plainly asserts, he had a right to marry as well as other apostles, and claim a maintenance for his wife, nay, and his children too, if he had any, from the churches, without labouring with his own hands to procure it. *Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working?* ver. 6. In short, the apostle here claims a maintenance from the churches, both for *him* and *his*. This was due from them, and what he might claim.

(2.) He proceeds, by *several arguments*, to prove his claim. (1.) From the common practice and expectations of mankind. Those who addict and give themselves up to any way of business in the world, expect to live out of it. Soldiers expect to be paid for their service. Husbandmen and shepherds expect to get a livelihood out of their labours. If they plant vineyards, and dress and cultivate them, it is with expectation of fruit. If they feed a flock, it is with the expectation of being fed and clothed by it, ver. 9. *Who goeth a warfare at any time at his own charge? Who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not the fruit thereof? Who feedeth a flock, and eateth not the milk thereof?* Note, It is very natural, and very reasonable, for ministers to expect a livelihood out of their labours. (2.) He argues it out of the Jewish law. *Say I these things as a man, or saith not the law the same also?* ver. 8. Is this merely a dictate of common reason, and according to common usage only? No, it is also consonant to the old law. God had therein ordered, *that the ox should not be muzzled, whilst he was treading out the corn; or hindered from eating, whilst he was preparing the corn for man's use, and treading it out of the ear.* But this law was not chiefly given out of God's regard to oxen, or concern for them, but to teach mankind, that all due encouragement should be given to them, who are employed by us, or labouring for our good; that the labourers should taste of the fruit of their labours. *They that plow should plow in hope, and they who thresh in hope should be partakers of their hope,* ver. 10. The law saith this about oxen for our sakes. Note, They that lay themselves out to do our souls good, should not have their mouths muzzled, but have food provided for them. (3.) He argues from common equity. *If we have sown to you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?* What they had sown was much better than they expected to reap. They had taught them the way to eternal life, and laboured heartily to put them in possession of it. It was no great matter, sure, whilst they were giving themselves up to this work, to expect a support, of their own temporal life. They had been instruments of conveying to them the greatest spiritual blessings; and had they no claim to as great a share in their carnal things, as was necessary to subsist them? Note, Those who enjoy spiritual benefits by the ministry of the word, should not grudge a maintenance to such as are employed in this work. If they have received real benefit, one would think they could not grudge them this. What, get so much good by them, and yet grudge to do so little good to them! Is this grateful or equitable? (4.) He argues from the maintenance they afforded others. *If others are partakers of this power over you, are not we rather?* You allow others this maintenance, and confess their claim just; but who hath so just a claim as I from the church of Corinth? Who has given greater evidences of the apostolical mission; who has laboured so much for your good, or done like service amongst you? Note, Ministers should be valued and provided for according to their worth. Nevertheless, saith the apostle, *we have not used this power, but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ.* We have not insisted on our right, but have rather been in straits, to serve the interests of the gospel, and promote the salvation of souls. He renounced his right, rather than, by claiming it, he would hinder his success. He denied himself for fear of giving offence, yet claims his right, lest his self-denial should prove prejudicial to the ministry. Note, He is likely to plead most effectually for the rights of others, who shews a generous disregard to his own. It is plain, in this case, that justice, and not self-love, is the principle by which he is acted. (5.) He argues from the *old Jewish establishment*. *Do ye not know, that they which minister about holy things, live of the things of the temple, and they which wait at the altar, are partakers with the altar?* ver. 13. And if the Jewish priesthood were maintained out of the holy things that were then offered, shall not Christ's ministers have a maintenance out of their ministry? Is there not as much reason we should be maintained as they? (6.) He asserts it to be the institution of Christ: *Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel,* ver. 14.

should have a right to a maintenance, though not bound to demand it, and insist upon it. It is the peoples duty to maintain their minister by Christ's appointment, though it be not a duty bound on every minister to call for, or accept it. He may waive his right, as Paul did, without being a sinner; but they transgress an appointment of Christ, who deny or withhold it. They who preach the gospel, have a right to live by it; and they who attend on their ministry, and yet take no thought about their subsistence, fail very much in their duty to Christ, and the respect owing to them.

15. But I have used none of these things. Neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me: for it *were* better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void. 16. For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me: yea, wo is unto me if I preach not the gospel. 17. For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me. 18. What is my reward then? verily that when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel.

Here he tells them he had, notwithstanding, waved his privilege, and lays down his reason for doing it.

(1.) He tells them he had neglected to claim his right in times past, *I have used none of these things*, ver. 15. Neither eat or drank himself at their cost, nor led about a wife to be maintained by them, nor forbore working to maintain himself. From others he received a maintenance, but not from them, for some special reasons. Nor did he write this to make his claim now. Though he here asserts his right, yet he does not claim his due; but denies himself for their sakes, and the gospel.

(2.) We have the reason assigned of his exercising this self-denial. He would not have his glorying made void. *It were better for him to die, than that any man should make his glorying void*, ver. 15. This glorying did imply nothing in it of boasting or self-conceit, or catching at applause, but an high degree of satisfaction and comfort. It was a singular pleasure to him, to preach the gospel without making it burdensome; and he was resolved, that among them he would not lose this satisfaction. His advantages for promoting the gospel were his glory, and he valued them above his rights, or his very life. *Better were it for him to die, than to have his glorying made void*; than to have it justly said he preferred his wages to his work. No, he was ready to deny himself for the sake of the gospel. Note, It is the glory of a minister, to prefer the success of his ministry to his interests, and deny himself that he may serve Christ, and save souls. Not that in so doing he does more than he ought, he is still acting within the bounds of the law of charity. But he acts upon truly noble principles, he brings much honour to God in so doing, and *those that honour him he will honour*. It is what God will approve and commend, what a man may value himself for, and take comfort in, though he cannot make a merit of it before God.

(3.) He shews, that this self-denial was more honourable in itself, and yielded him much more content and comfort, than his preaching did. *Though I preach the gospel, I have nothing wherewith to glory*, ver. 16. *For necessity is laid upon me: Yea, wo is unto me, if I preach not the gospel.* It is my charge, my business: It is the work for which I am constituted an apostle, chap. i. 17. This is a duty expressly bound upon me: it is not in any degree a matter of liberty. *Necessity is upon me.* I am false and unfaithful to my trust, I break a plain and express command, and *wo be to me if I do not preach the gospel*. Those that are set apart to the office of the ministry, have it in charge to preach the gospel. Wo be to them if they do not. From this none is excused: But it is not given in charge to all, or any preacher of the gospel, to do his work *gratis*, to preach and have no maintenance out of it. It is not said, *wo be to him* if he doth not preach the gospel, and yet maintain himself. In this point he is more at liberty. It may be his duty to preach at some seasons, and under some circumstances, without receiving a maintenance for it. But he has in the general a right to it, and may expect it from those among whom he labours. And when he renounces this right for the sake of the gospel, and the souls of men, though he does not supererrogate, he yet denies himself, waves his privilege and right. He does more than his charge and office in general, and at all times, obliges him to. Wo be to him if he does not preach the gospel, but it may sometimes be his duty to insist on his maintenance for so doing; and whenever he forbears to claim it, he parts with his right, though a man be bound to do so at some times, by the general duties of love to God, and charity to men. Note, It is a high attainment in religion, to renounce our own rights for the good of others, and will entitle to a peculiar reward from God. For,

(4.) The apostle here informs us, that doing our duty with a willing mind, will meet with a gracious recompence from God. *If I do this thing*, that is, either *preach the gospel*, or *take no maintenance willingly, I have a reward*. Indeed, it is willing service

service only that is capable of reward from God. It is not the bare doing any duty, but the doing it heartily, i. e. willingly and cheerfully, that God has promised to reward. Leave the heart out of our duties, and God abhors them. They are but the carcases, without the life and spirit of religion. They must preach willingly, who would be accepted of God in this duty. They must make their business a pleasure, and not esteem it a drudgery. And they that out of regard to the honour of God, or good of souls, give up their claim to a maintenance, should do this duty willingly, if they would be accepted in it, or rewarded for it. But whether the duty of the office be done willingly, or with reluctance, whether the heart be in it, or averse from it, all in office have a trust and charge from God, for which they must be accountable. Ministers have a dispensation of the gospel, or *stewardship*, *διοκονομία*, Luke xvi. 7. committed to them. Note, Christ's willing servants shall not fail of a recompence, and that proportioned to their fidelity, zeal, and diligence; and his slothful and unwilling servants shall all be called to an account. Taking his name, and professing to do his business, will make men accountable at his bar. And how sad an account have slothful servants to give?

(5.) The apostle sums up the argument, by laying before them the encouraging hope he had of a large recompence for his remarkable self-denial. *What is my reward then?* ver. 18. What is it I expect a recompence from God for? *That when I preach the gospel, I may make it without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel.* Or not so to claim my rights, as to make them destroy the great intentions and ends of my office, but renounce them for the sake of those. It is an abuse of power, to employ it against the very ends for which it is given. And the apostle would never use his power or privilege of being maintained by his ministry, so as to frustrate the ends of it, but would willingly and cheerfully deny himself, for the honour of Christ, and the interest of souls. And that minister who follows his example, may have cheerful expectations of a full recompence.

19. For though I be free from all men, yet have I made my self servant unto all, that I might gain the more. 20. And unto the Jews, I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; 21. To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ) that I might gain them that are without law. 22. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. 23. And this I do for the gospels sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you.

The apostle takes occasion from what he had before discoursed to mention some other instances of his self-denial, and parting with his liberty for the benefit of others.

(1.) He asserts his liberty, ver. 19. *Though I be free from all men.* He was free-born, a citizen of Rome. He was in bondage to none, nor depended upon any for his subsistence. Yet he made himself a servant to all, that he might gain the more. He carried it as a servant. He laboured for their good as a servant. He was careful to please as a servant his master. He acted in many cases, as if he had no privileges. And this, that he might gain the more, or make the more converts to Christianity. He made himself a servant, that they might be made free.

(2.) He instances in some particulars wherein he made himself a servant to all. He accommodated himself to all sorts of people. (1.) To the Jews, and *those under the law*, he became a Jew, and as *under the law*, to gain them. Though he looked on the ceremonial law as a yoke taken off by Christ, yet in many instances he submitted to it, that he might work upon the Jews, remove their prejudices, prevail with them to hear the gospel, and win them over to Christ. (2.) To those that are without law, as without law, i. e. to the Gentiles, whether converted to the Christian faith or not. In innocent things he could comply with peoples usages or humours for their advantage. He would reason with the philosophers in their own way. And as to converted Gentiles, he carried it amongst them as one that was not under the bondage of the Jewish law, as he had asserted and maintained concerning them. Though he did not act as a lawless person, but as one who was bound by the laws of Christ. He would transgress no laws of Christ to please or humour any man, but he would accommodate himself to all men where he might do it lawfully, to gain some. Paul was the *apostle of the Gentiles*, and so, one would have thought, might have excused himself from complying with the Jews; and yet to do them good, and win them over to Christ, he did, in innocent things, neglect the power he had to do otherwise, and conformed to some of their usages and laws. And though he might, by virtue of that character, have challenged authority over the Gentiles, yet he accommodated himself as much as he innocently might to their prejudices and ways

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of thinking. Doing good was the study and business of his life, and so he might reach this end, he did not stand on privileges and punctilio's. (3.) *To the weak he became as weak, that he might gain the weak*, ver. 22. He was willing to make the best of them. He did not despise nor judge them, but became as one of them, forbore to use his liberty for their sake, and was careful to lay no stumbling-block in their way. Where any through the weakness of their understanding, or the strength of their prejudices, were likely to fall into sin, or fall off from the gospel into *heathen idolatry*, through his use of his liberty, he refrained himself. He denied himself for their sakes, that he might insinuate into their affections, and gain their souls. In short, *he became all things to all men, that he might by all means*, i. e. all lawful means, *gain some*. He would not sin against God, to save the soul of his neighbour, but he would very cheerfully and readily deny himself. The rights of God he could not give up, but he might resign his own, and he very often did it for the good of others.

(3.) He assigns his reason for acting in this manner, ver. 23. *This I do for the gospel sake, and that I might be partaker thereof with you*, i. e. for the honour of Christ whose the gospel is, and for the salvation of souls for which it was designed, and that he and they might communicate in the privileges of it, or partake together of them. For these ends did he thus condescend, deny himself as to his liberty, and accommodate himself to the capacities and usages of those with whom he had to do, where he lawfully might. Note, An heart warmed with zeal for God, and breathing after the salvation of men, will not plead and insist upon rights and privileges in bar to this design. They manifestly abuse their power in the gospel, who employ it not to *edification* but *destruction*, and therefore breathe nothing of its spirit.

24. Know ye not that they which run in a race, run all, but one receiveth the prize? so run that ye may obtain. 25. And every man that striveth for the mastery, is temperate in all things: Now, they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible. 26. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly, so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: 27. But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away.

In these verses the apostle hints at the great encouragement he had to act in this manner. He had a glorious prize, an *incorruptible crown* in view. And upon this head he compares himself to the racers and combatants in the *Isthmian games*, an allusion well known to the Corinthians, because they were celebrated in their neighbourhood. *Know ye not that they which run in a race, run all, but one obtaineth the prize?* ver. 24. All run at your games, but one gets the race only, and wins the crown. And here he,

(1.) Excites them to their duty. *So run that ye may obtain.* It is quite otherwise in the Christian race, than in your races. Only one wins the prize in them: You may all run, so as to obtain. You have great encouragement therefore to persist constantly, and diligently, and vigorously, in your course. There is room for all to get the prize. You cannot fail, if you run well. Yet there should be a noble emulation. You should endeavour to out-do one another. And it is a glorious contest, who shall get first to heaven, or have the best rewards in that blessed world. I make it my endeavour thus to run, so do you. No man ever more heartily pursued the prize in your Isthmian races, than I do after the recompence of the reward. So do you, as you see me go before you. Note, It is the duty of Christians to follow their ministers closely in the chase of eternal glory, and the honour and duty of ministers to lead them the way.

(2.) He directs them in their course by setting more fully to view his own example, still carrying on the allusion. (1.) They that run in their games were kept to a *set diet*: *Every man that strives for the mastery, is temperate in all things*, ver. 25. The cuffers and wrestlers in your exercises, are kept to strict diet and discipline. Nay, they keep themselves to it. They do not indulge themselves, but restrain themselves from the food they eat, and so from the liberties they use, on other occasions. And should not Christians much more abridge themselves of their liberty, for so glorious an end, as winning the race, and obtaining the prize set before them? They used a very spare diet and coarse food, and denied themselves much, to prepare for their race and combat, so do I. So should you after my example. It is hard, if for the heavenly crown you cannot abstain from heathen sacrifices. (2.) They were not only temperate, but enured themselves to hardships. They who cuffed with one another in these exercises, prepared themselves by *beating the air*, as the apostle calls it, or by throwing out their arms, and thereby enuring themselves beforehand to deal about their blows in close combat, or brandish them by way of flourish. There is no room for any such exercise in the Christian warfare. Christians are ever in close combat. Their enemies make fierce and hearty opposition, and are

ever at hand, and for this reason they must lay about them in earnest, and never drop the contest, or flag and faint in it. They must fight, not as those that beat the air, but must strive against their enemies with all their might. One enemy the apostle here mentions, viz. the body; this must be kept under, *beaten black and blue*, as the combatants were in these Grecian games, and thereby brought into subjection. By the body is to be understood, fleshly appetites and inclinations. These the apostle set himself to curb and conquer, and in this the Corinthians were bound to imitate him. Note, They who would aright pursue the interests of their souls, must beat down their bodies, and keep them under. They must combat hard with fleshly lusts, till they have subdued them; and not indulge a wanton appetite, and long for heathenish sacrifices, or eat them to please their flesh, at the hazard of their brethren's souls. The body must be made to serve the mind, not suffered to lord over it.

(3.) The apostle presses this advice on the Corinthians, by proper arguments drawn from the same contenders. (1.) They take pains, and undergo all those hardships, to obtain a corruptible crown, ver. 25. *but we an incorruptible*. They who conquered in these games were only crowned with the withering leaves or boughs of trees, of olive, bays, or laurel. But Christians have an incorruptible crown in view, a crown of glory that never fadeth away, an inheritance incorruptible, reserved in heaven for them. And would they yet suffer themselves to be out-done by these racers or wrestlers? Can they use abstinence in diet, exert themselves in racing, expose their bodies to so much hardships in a combat, who have no more in view, but the trifling huzzas of a giddy multitude, or a crown of leaves? And shall not Christians, who hope for approbation of the sovereign Judge, and a crown of glory from his hands, stretch forward in the heavenly race, and exert themselves in beating down their fleshly inclinations, and the strong holds of sin? (2.) The racers in these games run at uncertainty. *All run, but one receives the prize*, ver. 24. Every racer therefore is at a great uncertainty, whether he shall win it or no. But the Christian racer is at no such uncertainty. Every one may run here so as to obtain, but then he must run within the lines. He must keep to the path of duty prescribed, which, some think, is the meaning of *running not as uncertainly*, ver. 26. He who keeps within the limits prescribed, and keeps on in his race, will never miss his crown, though others may get theirs before him. And would the Grecian racers keep within their bounds, and exert themselves to the very last, when one only could win, and all must be uncertain which that one would be? And shall not Christians be much more exact and vigorous, when all are sure of a crown when they come to the end of their race? (3.) He sets before himself and them the danger of yielding to fleshly inclinations, and pampering the body, and its lusts and appetites. *I keep my body under, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away*, ver. 27. *rejected, disapproved*, ἀδόκιμος, one to whom the βελέτρης, the judge, umpire of the race will not decree the crown. The allusion to the games runs through the whole sentence. Note, A preacher of salvation may yet miss it. He may shew others the way to heaven, and never get thither himself. To prevent this, Paul took so much pains in subduing and keeping under bodily inclinations, lest by any means he himself who had preached to others, should yet miss the crown, be disapproved and rejected by his sovereign Judge. An holy fear of himself was necessary to preserve the fidelity of an apostle. And how much more necessary is it to our preservation? Note, Holy fear of ourselves, and not presumptuous confidence, is the best security against apostasy from God, and final rejection by him.

C H A P. X.

In this chapter the apostle prosecutes the argument at the close of the last, and (1.) Warns the Corinthians against security, by the example of the Jews; who, notwithstanding their profession and privileges, were terribly punished of God for their many sins, their history being left upon record for the admonition of Christians, ver. 1—15. (2.) He resumes his former argument, chap. viii. about eating things offered to idols. And shews that it is utterly inconsistent with true Christianity, and downright gross idolatry, to eat them as things offered to idols. It is having fellowship with devils, which cannot consist with having fellowship with God, ver. 15—23. (3.) He lets them yet know, that though they must not eat of things sacrificed to idols as such, and out of any regard to the idol, yet they might buy such flesh in the markets, or eat it at the table of heathen acquaintance, without asking any questions: for that the heathens abuse of them did not render the creatures of God unfit to be the food of his servants. Yet liberty of this kind must be used with a due regard to weak consciences, and no offence given by it, to Jew or Gentile, or the church of God, ver. 23, ad fin.

1. **M**oreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea;

2. And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud, and in the sea; 3. And did all eat the same spiritual meat; 4. And did all drink the same spiritual drink: (For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.) 5. But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

In order to dissuade the Corinthians from communion with idolaters, and security in any sinful course, he sets before them the example of the Jews, the church under the Old Testament. They enjoyed great privileges, but having been guilty of heinous provocations, they fell under very grievous punishments. In these verses he reckons up their privileges, which in the main were the same with ours.

(1.) He prefaces this discourse with a note of regard. *Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant*. I would not have you without the knowledge of this matter; it is a thing worthy both your knowledge and attention. It is an history very instructive and monitory. Judaism was Christianity under a veil, wrapt up in types and dark hints. The gospel was preached to them in their legal rites and sacrifices. And the providence of God towards them, and what happened to them notwithstanding these privileges, may and ought to be warnings to us.

(2.) He specifies some of their privileges. He begins, (1.) With their deliverance from Egypt. *Our fathers*, that is, the ancestors of us Jews, were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea. They were all under the divine covering and conduct. The cloud served for both purposes. It sometimes contracted itself into a cloudy pillar, shining on one side to shew them their way, dark on the other to hide them from their pursuing enemies; and sometimes spread itself over them as a mighty sheet, to defend them from the burning sun in the sandy desert, *Psal. cv. 39*. They were miraculously conducted through the Red-sea, where the pursuing Egyptians were drowned. It was a lane to them, but a grave to these. A proper type of our redemption by Christ, who saves us by conquering and destroying his enemies and ours. They were very dear to God, and much in his favour, when he would work such miracles for their deliverance, and take them so immediately under his guidance and protection. (2.) They had sacraments like ours. (1.) *They were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud, and in the sea*, ver. 2. or into Moses, i. e. brought under obligation to Moses's law and covenant, as we are by baptism under the Christian law and covenant. It was to them a typical baptism. (2.) *They did all eat of the same spiritual meat, and drink of the same spiritual drink*, viz. that we do. The manna on which they fed was a type of Christ crucified, the bread which came down from heaven, which whoso eateth shall live for ever. Their drink was a stream fetched from a rock which followed them in all their journeyings in the wilderness; and this Rock was Christ, viz. in type and figure. He is the rock on which the Christian church is built; and of the streams that issue from him do all believers drink, and are refreshed. Now all the Jews did eat of this meat, and drink of this rock, called here a spiritual rock, because it typified spiritual things. These were great privileges. One would think this should have saved them. That all who eat of that spiritual meat, and drank of that spiritual drink, should have been holy and acceptable to God. Yet was it otherwise. *With many of them God was not well pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness*, ver. 5. Note, Men may enjoy many and great spiritual privileges in this world, and yet come short of eternal life. Many of those who were baptized into Moses in the cloud and sea, i. e. had their faith of his divine commission confirmed by these miracles, yet were overthrown in the wilderness, and never saw the promised land. Let none presume upon their great privileges, or profession of the truth; these will not secure heavenly happiness, nor prevent divine judgments here on earth, except the root of the matter be in us.

6. Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. 7. Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. 8. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. 9. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. 10. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. 11. Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. 12. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall. 13. There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation

temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it. 14. Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.

The apostle having recited their privileges, proceeds here to an account of their faults and punishments, their sins and plagues, which are left upon record for an example to us. A warning against the like sins, if we would escape the like punishments. We must not do as they did, lest we suffer as they suffered. Several of their sins are instanced in, as cautions to us. As, (1.) We should shun inordinate desires after carnal objects, must *not* *lust after evil things as they lusted*, ver. 6. God fed them with manna, but they must have flesh, *Numb. xi. 4.* They had food for their supply, but not content with that, they asked *meat for their lusts*, *Psal. cvi. 14.* Carnal desires get head by indulgence, and therefore should be observed and checked in their first rise. If once they prevail, and bear sway in us, we know not whither they will carry us. This caution stands first, because carnal appetites indulged are the root and source of much sin.

(2.) He warns against idolatry. *Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them*, as it is written, *the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.* The sin of the golden calf is referred to, *Exod. xxxii. 6.* They first sacrificed to the idol, then feasted on the sacrifices, and then danced before it. Though only eating and drinking are mentioned here, yet the sacrifice is supposed. The apostle is speaking to the case of the Corinthians, who were tempted to feast on heathen sacrifices, things offered to idols, though they do not seem to have been under any temptation to sacrifice themselves. Even eating and drinking of the sacrifices before the idol, and as things sacrificed, was idolatry, which by the example of the Israelites they should be warned to avoid.

(3.) He cautions against fornication. A sin to which the inhabitants of Corinth were in a peculiar manner addicted. They had a temple among them dedicated to Venus, *i. e.* to lust, with above a thousand priestesses belonging to it, all common whores. How needful was a caution against fornication, to those who lived in so corrupt a city, and had been used to such a dissolution of manners? especially when they were under temptations to idolatry too, and spiritual whoredom did, in many cases, lead to bodily prostitution? Most of the gods the heathens served, were represented as very patterns of leudness, and much leudness was committed in the very worship of many of them. Many of the Jewish writers, and many Christians after them, think such worship was paid to Baal-Peor. And that fornication was committed with the daughters of Moab, in the worship of that idol. They were enticed by these women both to spiritual and corporal whoredom, first to feast on the sacrifice, if not to do more beastly facts in honour of the idol, and then to defile themselves with strange flesh, *Numb. xxv.* which brought on a plague, that in one day slew twenty-three thousand, besides those which fell by the hand of publick justice. Note, Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge, in whatever external relation they may stand to him, and whatever outward privileges he may bestow upon them. Let us fear the sins of Israel, if we would shun their plagues.

(4.) He warns us against tempting Christ, *as some of them tempted, and were destroyed of serpents*, ver. 9. or provoking him to jealousy, ver. 22. He was with the church in the wilderness. He was the angel of the covenant that went before them. But he was greatly grieved and provoked by them many ways. *They spoke against him and Moses, wherefore have ye brought us out of Egypt to die in the wilderness?* For which reason God sent fiery serpents among them, *Numb. xxi. 5, 6.* by which many of them were stung mortally. And it is but just to fear, that such as tempt Christ under the present dispensation, should be left by him in the power of the old serpent.

(5.) He warns against murmuring: *Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer*, ver. 10. by a destroying angel, and executioner of divine vengeance. They quarrelled with God, and murmured against Moses his minister, when any difficulties pressed them. When they met with discouragements in the way to Canaan, they were very apt to fly in the face of their leaders, were for displacing them, and going back to Egypt under the conduct of others of their own chusing. Somewhat like this seems to have been the case of the Corinthians. They murmured against Paul, and in him against Christ, and seem to have set up other teachers that would indulge and soothe them in their inclinations, and a revolt to idolatry. Rather let them feast on *idol* sacrifices than bear the reproach, or expose themselves to the ill-will of heathen neighbours. Such conduct was very provoking to God, and was likely to bring upon them swift destruction, as it did on the Israelites, *Numb. xiv. 37.* Note, Murmuring against divine disposals and commands, is a sin that greatly provokes, especially when it grows to such an head as to issue in apostasy, and a revolt from him, and his good ways.

The apostle to these particular cautions, (1.) Subjoins a more general one, ver. 11. *All these things happened to them for ensamples, and were written for our admonition.* Not only the laws and ordinances of the Jews, but the providences of God towards them

were typical. Their sins against God, and backslidings from him, were typical of the infidelity of many under the gospel. God's judgments on them were types of spiritual judgments now. Their exclusion from the earthly Canaan, typified the exclusion of many under the gospel out of the heavenly Canaan, for their unbelief. Their history was written to be a standing monitory to the church, even under the last and most perfect dispensation. *To us on whom the end of the world is come*; the concluding period of God's gracious government over men. Note, Nothing in scripture is written in vain. God had wise and gracious purposes towards us, in leaving the Jewish history upon record, and it is our wisdom and duty to receive instruction from it. Upon this hint the apostle grounds a caution, ver. 12. *Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.* Note, Others *barms* should be *cautions* to us. He that thinks he stands, should not be confident and secure, but upon his guard. Others have fallen, and so may we. And then we are most likely to fall, when we are most confident of our own strength, and thereupon most apt to be secure, and off our guard. Distrust of himself, putting him at once upon vigilance and dependence on God, is the Christian's best security against all sin. Note, He who thinks he stands is not like to keep his footing, if he fears no fall, nor guards against it. God hath not promised to keep us from falling, if we do not look to ourselves. His protection supposes our own care and caution.

But to this word of *caution* he (2.) Adds a word of *comfort*, ver. 13. Though it is displeasing to God for us to *presume*, it is not pleasing to him for us to *despair*. If the former be a great *sin*, the latter is far from being innocent. Though we must fear and take heed lest we fall, yet should we not be terrified and amazed. For either our trials will be proportioned to our strength, or strength shall be supplied in proportion to our temptations. We live indeed in a tempting world, where we are compassed about with snares. Every *place*, condition, relation, employment, and enjoyment, abounds with them; yet what comfort may we fetch from such a passage? For, (1.) *No temptation*, saith the apostle, *hath yet taken you, but such as is common to man*, what is human, *i. e.* such as you may expect from men of such principles as *beathens*, and such power; or else such as is common to mankind in the present state, or else such as the spirit and resolution of mere men may bear you through. Note, The trials of common Christians are but common trials. Others have the like burdens, and the like temptations. What they bear up under, and break through, we may also. (2.) *God is faithful.* Though Satan be a deceiver, God is true. Men may be false, and the world may be false; but God is faithful, and our strength and security is in him. He keepeth his covenant, and will never fail the filial hope and trust of his children. (3.) He is wise as well as faithful, and will proportion our burden to our strength. *He will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able.* He knows what we can bear, and what we can bear up against; and he will in his wise providence either proportion our temptations to our strength, or make us able to grapple with them. He will take care that we be not overcome, if we rely upon him, and resolve to approve ourselves faithful to him. We need not perplex ourselves with the difficulties in our way, when God will take care that they shall not be too great for us to encounter; especially, (4.) When he will make them to issue well. *He will make a way to escape*, *i. e.* either the trial itself, or at least the mischief of it. There is no valley so dark, but he can find a way through it; no affliction so grievous, but he can prevent or remove, or enable us to support, and in the end over-rule to our advantage.

And upon this argument he (3.) Grounds another caution against idolatry. Wherefore, *my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.* Observe, (1.) *How he addresses them, my dearly beloved.* It is out of tender affection to them, that he presses this advice upon them. (2.) The matter of his advice, *flee idolatry.* Shun it, and all approaches towards it. Idolatry is the most heinous injury and affront to the true God. It is transferring his worship and honour to a rival. (3.) The ground of this advice. Seeing you have such encouragement to trust God, and be faithful, do you approve yourselves men, be not shaken by any discouragements your heathen enemies may lay before you. God will succour and assist, help you in your trials, and help you out of them, and therefore be not guilty of any idolatrous compliances. Note, We have all the encouragement in the world to flee sin, and prove faithful to God. We cannot fall by a temptation, if we cleave fast to him.

15. I speak as to wise men: judge ye what I say.
16. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?
17. For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.
18. Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?
19. What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing?
20. But I say,

I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. 21. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils.. 22. Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?

In this passage the apostle urges the general caution against idolatry, in the particular case of eating the heathen sacrifices *as such*, and out of any religious respect to the *idol*, to whom they were sacrificed.

(1.) He prefaces his argument with an appeal to their own reason and judgment. *I speak to wise men, judge ye what I say*, ver. 15. *q. d.* you are great pretenders to wisdom, to close reasoning and argument, I can leave it with your own reason and conscience, whether I do not argue justly. Note, It is no dishonour to an inspired teacher, nor disadvantage to his argument, to appeal for the truth of it, to the reason and consciences of his hearers. It comes upon them with the greater force, when it comes with this conviction. Paul, an inspired apostle, would yet in some cases leave it with the Corinthians to judge, whether what he taught was not conformable to their own light and sense.

(2.) He lays down his argument from the Lord's-supper. *The cup which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?* Is not this sacred rite an instrument of communion with God? Do we not therein profess to be in friendship, and to have fellowship with him? Is it not a token whereby we professedly hold communion with Christ, whose body was broken, and blood shed, to procure remission of our sins, and the favour of God? And can we be in alliance with Christ, or friendship with God, without being devoted to him? In short, the Lord's-supper is a feast on the sacrificed body and blood of our Lord; *epulum ex oblatis*. And to eat of the feast, is to partake of the sacrifice, and so to be his guests to whom the sacrifice was offered, and this in token of friendship with him. Thus to partake of the Lord's table, is to profess ourselves his guests, and covenant people. This is the very purpose and intention of this symbolical eating and drinking. It is holding communion with God, and partaking of those privileges, and professing ourselves under those obligations, which result from the death and sacrifice of Christ: and this in conjunction with all true Christians, with whom we have communion also in this ordinance. *Because the bread is one, we being many are one body, for we are made partakers of one bread*, or loaf, ver. 17. Which I think is thus more truly rendered: by partaking of one broken loaf, the emblem of our Saviour's broken body, who is *the only true bread that came down from heaven*, we coalesce into one body, become members of him and one another. Those who truly partake by faith, have this communion with Christ, and one another: and those who eat the outward elements make profession of having this communion, of belonging to God, and the blessed fraternity of his people and worshippers. This is the true meaning of this holy rite.

(3.) He confirms this from the Jewish worship and customs. *Behold Israel after the flesh: Are not they which eat of the sacrifices, partakers of the altar?* i. e. of the sacrifice offered upon it. Those who were admitted to eat of the offerings, were esteemed to partake of the sacrifice itself as made for them, and to be sanctified thereby; and therefore sure to worship God, and be in alliance or covenant with him, even the God of Israel, to whom the sacrifice was made: this was a symbol or token of holding communion with him.

(4.) He applies this to the argument against feasting with idolaters on their sacrifices, and to prove them that do so idolaters. This he does, (1.) By allowing the principle on which they would argue it to be lawful, *viz.* that *an idol was nothing*. Many of them were nothing at all, none of them had any divinity in them, *what was sacrificed to idols was nothing*; no way changed from what it was before, but was every whit as fit for food, considered in itself. They indeed seem to argue, that because an idol was nothing, what was offered was no sacrifice, but common and ordinary food, of which they might therefore eat with as little scruple. Now the apostle allows, that the food was not changed as to its nature, was as fit to be eaten as common food, where it was set before any, who knew not of its having been offered to an idol. But, (2.) He proves, that eating it as a part of an heathen sacrifice, was (1.) A partaking with them in their idolatry. *It was having fellowship with devils*. Because what the Gentiles sacrificed, they sacrificed to devils. And to feast with them upon these sacrifices, was to partake in the sacrifice, and therefore to worship the God to whom it was made, and have fellowship or communion with him. Just as he who eats the Lord's Supper is supposed to partake in the Christian sacrifice, or as they which eat the Jewish sacrifices did partake of what was offered on their altar. But heathens sacrificed to devils. Therefore do not feast on their sacrifices. Doing it, is a token of your having fellowship with the devils to whom they are offered. I would not have you be in communion with devils.

(2.) It was a virtual renouncing Christianity. *Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils. Ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and the table of devils*, ver. 21. To partake of this Christian feast, was to have communion with Christ, to partake of the feasts made out of honour to the heathen idols, and made of things sacrificed to them, was to have communion with devils. Now this was to compound contraries. It was by no means consistent. Communion with Christ, and communion with the devil, could never be had at once. One must be renounced, if the other was maintained. He who held communion with Christ, must renounce that with devils. He that held communion with devils, must by that very deed renounce communion with Christ. And what a manifest self-contradiction must that man's conduct be, that would partake of the Lord's table, and yet partake of the table of devils? *God and mammon* can never be served together, nor fellowship be at once had with Christ and Satan. Those who communicate with devils must virtually renounce Christ. This may also intimate, that such as indulge themselves in gluttony or drunkenness, and by so doing make their own table *the table of devils*, or keep up fellowship with *Satan* by a course of known and wilful wickedness, cannot partake truly of the cup and table of the Lord. They may use the sign, but do not the thing signified thereby. For a man can never be at once in communion with Christ and his church, and yet in fellowship with *Satan*. Note, How much reason have we to look to it, that every sin, an idol, be renounced by us, when we eat and drink at the Lord's table?

(5.) He warns them upon the whole against such idolatry, by signifying to them that God is a jealous God, ver. 22. *Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy, are we stronger than he?* It is very likely many among the Corinthians made light of being at these heathen feasts, and thought there was no harm in it. But the apostle bids them beware. The reason with which the second commandment is enforced, is, *I am a jealous God*. God cannot endure a rival in matter of worship, nor *give his glory*, nor suffer it to be given to another. They that have fellowship with other gods, *provoke him to jealousy*, Deut. xxxii. 16. And before this be done, persons should consider whether they are stronger than he. It is a dangerous thing to provoke God's anger, unless we could withstand his power. But *who can stand before him when he is angry?* Numb. i. 6. This should be considered by all who continue in the love and liking of sin, and in league with it, whilst yet they profess to keep up communion with Christ. Is not this the way to provoke his jealousy and indignation? Note, Attention to the greatness of God's power, should restrain us from provoking his jealousy, from doing any thing to displease him. Shall we rouse almighty wrath? And how shall we understand it? Are we a match for God? Can we resist his power, or controul it? And if not, shall we arm it against us, by provoking him to jealousy? No, let us fear this power, and let this restrain us from all provocation.

23. All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not. 24. Let no man seek his own: but every man another's wealth. 25. Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, that eat, asking no question for conscience sake. 26. For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof. 27. If any of them that believe not, bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake. 28. But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not, for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake. For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof. 29. Conscience I say, not thine own, but of the others: for why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience? 30. For, if I by grace be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks? 31. Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. 32. Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God: 33. Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.

In this passage the apostle shews, in what instances notwithstanding, Christians might lawfully eat of what had been sacrificed to idols. They must not eat it out of religious respect to the idol, nor go into his temple, and hold a feast there, upon what they knew was an idol sacrifice, nor perhaps out of the temple, if they knew it was a feast held upon a sacrifice; but there were cases wherein they might eat what had been offered without sin. Some such the apostle here instances in. But,

(1.) Gives a caution against abusing our liberty in lawful things. That may be lawful which is not expedient, which will not edify. But a Christian must not barely consider what is lawful, but

but what is expedient, and for the use of edification. A private Christian should do so even in his private conduct. *He must not seek his own only, but his neighbour's wealth.* He must be concerned not to hurt his neighbour, nay he must be concerned to promote his welfare; and must consider how to act, so as that he may help others, and not hinder them in their holiness, comfort, or salvation. They who allow themselves in every thing not plainly sinful in itself, will often run into what is evil by accident, and do much mischief to others. Every thing lawful in itself to be done, is not therefore lawfully done. Circumstances may make that a sin, which in itself is none. And these must be weighed, and the expedience of an action, and its tendency to edification, must be considered before it be done. Note, The welfare of others, as well as our own convenience, must be consulted in many things we do, if we would do them well.

(2.) He tells them that what was sold in the shambles they might eat without asking questions. The priest's share of heathen sacrifices was thus frequently offered to sale, after it had been offered in the temple. Now, the apostle tells them, they need not be so scrupulous as to ask the butcher in the market, whether the meat he sold had been offered to an idol. It was there sold as common food, and as such might be bought and used. *For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof,* ver. 26. and the fruit and products of the earth, were designed by him, the great proprietor, for the use and subsistence of mankind, and more especially of his own children and servants. *Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer,* 1 Tim. iv. 4. *To the pure all things are pure,* Tit. i. 15. Note, Though it is sinful to use any food in an idolatrous manner; it is no sin after such abuse, to apply it in a holy manner to its common use.

(3.) He adds, that if they were invited by any heathen acquaintance to a feast, they might go and eat what was set before them, without asking questions, ver. 27. nay, though they knew things sacrificed to idols were served up at such entertainments, as well as sold in the shambles. Note, The apostle doth not prohibit their going to a feast upon the invitation of them that believed not. There is a civility owing even to infidels and heathens. Christianity does by no means bind us up from the common offices of humanity, or allow us in an uncourteous behaviour to any of our own kind, however they may differ from us in religious sentiments or practices. And when Christians were invited to feast with infidels, they were not to ask needless questions about the food set before them, but eat without scruple. Needless enquiries might perplex their minds and consciences, for which reason they were to be avoided. Any thing fit to be eaten, that was set before them as a common entertainment, they might lawfully eat. And why then should they scrupulously enquire, whether what was set before them had been sacrificed? It is to be understood of civil feasting, not religious. For these last among the heathens were feasts upon their sacrifices, which he had condemned before as a participation in their idolatrous worship. At a common feast they might expect common food, and they needed not to move scruples in their own minds, whether what was set before them was otherwise or no. Note, Though Christians should be very careful to know and understand their duty, yet should they not by needless enquiries perplex themselves.

(4.) Yet even at such an entertainment, he adds, if any should say it was a thing that had been offered to idols, they should refrain: *Eat not, for his sake that shewed, and for conscience sake.* Whether it were the master of the feast, or any of the guests. Whether it were spoken in the hearing of all, or whispered in the ear. They should refrain for his sake, who suggested this to them, whether he were an infidel, or an infirm Christian; and for conscience sake, out of regard to conscience: that they might shew a regard to it in themselves, and keep up a regard to it in others. This he backs with the same reason as the former, *for the earth is the Lord's.* There is food enough provided by our common Lord, of which we may eat without scruple. Note, The same doctrine may be variously improved, as here, *The earth is the Lord's,* therefore you may eat any thing without scruple that is set before you as common food: and yet, because *the earth is the Lord's,* eat nothing that will give offence, lay a stumbling-block before others, and encourage some in idolatry, or tempt others to eat when they are not clear in their own mind, that it is lawful, and so sin and wound their own conscience. Note, Christians should be very cautious of doing what may thus prejudice the consciences of others, and weaken their authority with them, which is by all means to be kept up.

(5.) He urges them to refrain where they will give offence, whilst yet he allows it lawful to eat what was set before them as common food, though it had been offered in sacrifice. Another man's conscience is no measure to our conduct. What he thinks unlawful is not thereby made unlawful to me, but may be a matter of liberty still; and as long as I own God as the giver of my food, and render him thanks for it, it is very unjust to reproach me for using it: this must be understood abstracted from the scandal given, by eating in the circumstance mentioned. Though some understand it to mean, why should I, by using the liberty I have, give occasion to those who are scandalized to speak evil of me? according to that advice of the apostle, *Rom. xiv. 16.*

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Let not your good be evil spoken of. Note, Christians should take care not to use their liberty to the hurt of others, nor their own reproach.

(6.) The apostle takes occasion from this discourse to lay down a general rule for Christians conduct, and apply it to this particular case, ver. 31, 32, viz. that in eating and drinking, and in all we do, we should aim at *the glory of God*, at pleasing and honouring him. This is the fundamental principle of practical godliness. The great end of all practical religion must direct us, where particular and express rules are wanting. Nothing must be done against the glory of God, and the good of our neighbours connected with it. Nay, the tendency of our behaviour to the common good, and the credit of our holy religion, should give direction to it. And therefore, nothing should be done by us to offend any, *whether Jew, or Gentile, or the church,* ver. 32. The Jews should not be unnecessarily grieved or prejudiced, who have such abhorrence of idols, that they reckon every thing offered to them thereby defiled, and that it will pollute and render culpable all who partake of it. Nor should heathens be countenanced in their idolatry, by any behaviour of ours, which they may construe as homage or honour done to their idols. Nor young converts from Gentilism, take any encouragement from our conduct, to retain any veneration for the heathen gods and worship, which they have renounced. Nor should we do any thing, that might be a means to pervert any members of the church from their Christian profession or practice. Our own humour and appetite must not determine our practice, but the honour of God, and the good and edification of the church. We should not so much consult our own pleasure and interest, as the advancement of the kingdom of God among men. Note, A Christian should be a man devoted to God, and of a publick spirit.

(7.) He presses all upon them by his own example. *Even as I please all men* (or study to do it) *in all things,* (that I lawfully can) *not seeking mine own profit, but that of many; that they may be saved,* ver. 33. Note, A preacher may press his advice home, with boldness and authority, when he can enforce it with his own example. He is most likely to promote a publick spirit in others, who can give evidence of it in himself. And it is highly commendable in a minister to neglect his own advantages, that he may promote the salvation of his hearers. This shews, that he hath a spirit suitable to his function. It is a station for publick usefulness, and can never be faithfully discharged by a man of a narrow spirit, and selfish principles.

CHAP. XI.

In this chapter the apostle blames, and endeavours to rectify some great indecencies, and manifest disorders in the church of Corinth. As (1.) The misconduct of their women (some of whom seem to have been inspired) in the publick assembly, who laid by their veils, the common token of subjection to their husbands in that part of the world. This behaviour he reprehends, requires them to keep veiled, asserts the superiority of the husband, yet so as to remember the husband that both were made for mutual help and comfort, ver. 1—17. (2.) He blames them for their discord, riot, and neglect and contempt of the poor at the Lord's-supper, ver. 17—23. (3.) To rectify these scandalous disorders, he sets before them the nature and intentions of this holy institution, directs them how they should attend on it, and warns them of the danger of a conduct so indecent as theirs, and of all unworthy receiving, ver. 23, ad fin.

1. **B**E ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ. 2. Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you. 3. But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman, is the man; and the head of Christ, is God. 4. Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head. 5. But every woman that prayeth, or prophesieth with her head uncovered, dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven. 6. For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered. 7. For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, for as much as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. 8. For the man is not of the woman: but the woman of the man. 9. Neither was the man created for the woman: but the woman for the man. 10. For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head, because of the angels. 11. Nevertheless, neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man in the Lord. 12. For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman: but all things of God. 13. Judge in your selves: is it

it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered? 14. Doth not even nature it self teach you, that if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? 15. But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering. 16. But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.

Paul having answered the cases put to him, proceeds in this chapter to the redress of grievances. The first verse of the chapter is put by those who divided the epistle into chapters, as a preface to the rest of the epistle, but seems to have been a more proper close to the last, in which he had enforced the cautions he had given against the abuse of liberty, by his own example. *Be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ*, ver. 1. fitly closes this argument; and the way of speaking in the next verse looks like a transition to another. But whether it more properly belongs to this, or the last chapter, it is plain from it, that Paul not only preached such doctrine as they ought to believe, but led such a life as they ought to imitate. *Be ye followers of me, is, be imitators of me, live as you see me live.* Note, Ministers are likely to preach most to the purpose, when they can press their hearers to follow their example. Yet would not Paul be followed blindly neither. He encourages neither implicit faith nor obedience. He would be followed himself no farther than he followed Christ. Christ's pattern is a copy without a blot, so is no man's else. Note, We should follow no leader farther than he follows Christ. Apostles should be left by us when they deviate from the example of their Master. He passes next to reprehend and reform an indecency among them, of which the *women* were more especially guilty. Concerning which, observe,

(1.) How he prefaceth it. He begins with a commendation of what was praise-worthy in them, *ver. 2. I praise you, that you remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances as I delivered them to you.* Many of them, it is probable, did this in the strictest sense of the expression: and he takes occasion from thence, to address to the body of the church under this good character; and the body might, in the *main*, have continued to observe the ordinances and institutions of Christ, though in some things they deviated from, and corrupted them. Note, That when we reprove what is amiss in any, it is very prudent and fit to commend what is good in them. It will shew, that the reproof is not from *ill-will*, and an humour of censuring and finding fault. And it will therefore procure the more regard to it.

(2.) He lays a foundation for his future reprehension, by asserting the superiority of the man over the woman. *I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God.* Christ in his mediatorial character and glorified humanity is at the head of mankind. He is not only first of the kind, but Lord and Sovereign. *He has a name above every name.* Though in this high office and authority he has a superior, God being his head; and as God is the head of Christ, and Christ the head of the whole human kind, so the man is the head of the two sexes. Not indeed with such dominion as Christ has over the kind, or God has over the *man Christ Jesus*. But a superiority and headship he has. And the woman should be in subjection, and not assume or usurp the man's place. This is the situation in which God has placed her, and for that reason she should have a mind suited to her rank, and not do any thing that looks like an affectation of changing places. Somewhat like this the women of the church of Corinth seem to have been guilty of, who were under inspiration, and prayed and prophesied even in their assemblies, *ver. 5.* It is indeed an apostolical canon, that the women *should keep silence in the churches*, chap. xiv. 34. *1 Tim. ii. 12.* which some understand *without limitation*, as if a woman under inspiration also must keep silence; which seems very well to agree with the connexion of the apostle's discourse, *chap. xiv.* Others *with a limitation*, though a woman might not from her own abilities pretend to teach, or so much as question and debate any thing in the church, yet when under inspiration the case was altered. She had liberty to speak. Or though she might not preach even by inspiration, because teaching is the business of a superior, yet she might *pray* or utter *hymns* by inspiration, even in the publick assembly. She did not shew any affectation of superiority over the man by such acts of publick worship. It is plain, the apostle doth not in this place prohibit the thing, but the manner of doing it. And yet he might utterly disallow the thing, and lay an unlimited restraint on the woman, in another part of the epistle. These things are not contradictory. It is to his present purpose to reprehend the manner wherein the women prayed and prophesied in the church, without determining *in this place*, whether they did well or ill in *praying or prophesying*. Note, The manner of doing a thing enters into the morality of it. We must not only be concerned to do good, but that the good we do be well done.

(3.) The thing he reprehends is the *woman's* praying or prophesying *uncovered*, or the *man's* doing either *covered*, ver. 4, 5. To understand this, it must be observed, that it was a signification either of shame or subjection for persons to be veiled, or covered, in the eastern countries, contrary to the custom of ours

where the being bare-headed betokens subjection, and being covered superiority and dominion. And this will help us better to understand,

(4.) The reasons on which he grounds his reprehension. (1.) The man *that prays or prophesies with his head covered, dishonour-eth his head*, viz. *Christ the head of every man*, ver. 3. by appearing in an habit unsuitable to the rank in which God has placed him. Note, We should even in our dress and habit avoid every thing that may dishonour Christ. The woman on the other hand, *who prays or prophesies with the head uncovered, dishonoureth her head*, viz. the man, ver. 3. She appears in the dress of her superior, and throws off the token of her subjection. And she might with equal decency cut her hair short, or cut it close, the common dress of the man in that age. This would be in a manner to declare that she was desirous of changing sexes. A manifest affectation of that superiority which God had conferred on the other sex. And this was properly the fault of these prophetesses in the church of Corinth. It was doing a thing which in that age of the world betokened superiority, and therefore a tacit claim of what did not belong to them, but the other sex. Note, The sexes should not affect to change places. The order in which divine wisdom has placed persons and things, is best and fittest. To endeavour to mend it, is to destroy all order, and introduce confusion. Women should keep to the rank God has chosen for them, and not dishonour their head; for this in the result is to dishonour God. If she was made out of the man, and for the man, and made to be the glory of the man, she should do nothing, especially in publick, that looks like a wish of having this order inverted. (2.) Another reason against this conduct was, that *the man is the image and glory of God*, the representative of that glorious dominion and headship which God has over the world. It is the man who is set at the head of this lower creation, and therein bears the resemblance of God. The woman on the other hand *is the glory of the man*, ver. 7. she is his representative. Not but she has dominion over the inferior creatures, as she is a partaker of human nature, and so far is God's representative too, but it is at *second hand*. She is the image of God, inasmuch as she is the image of the man. *For the man was not made out of the woman, but the woman out of the man*, ver. 8. The man was first made, and made head of the creation here below, and therein the image of the divine dominion: and the woman was made out of the man, and shone with a reflexion of his glory, being made superior to the other creatures here below, but in subjection to her husband, and deriving that honour from him out of whom she was made. (3.) *The woman was made for the man*, to be his help-meet, *and not the man for the woman*. She was naturally therefore made subject to him, because made for him, for his use and help, and comfort. And she who was intended to be always in subjection to the man, should do nothing in Christian assemblies, that looked like an affectation of equality. (4.) *She ought to have power on her head, because of the angels.* Power, i. e. a veil, the token, not of her having power or superiority, but being under the power of her husband, and subject to him, and inferior to the other sex. Rebecca, when she met Isaac, and was delivering herself into his possession, put on her veil, in token of her subjection, *Gen. xxiv. 50.* Thus would the apostle have the woman appear in Christian assemblies, even though they spake there by inspiration, *because of the angels*, i. e. say *some*, because of the *evil angels*. The woman *was first in the transgression, being deceived by the devil*, *1 Tim. ii. 11.* which increased her subjection to the man, *Gen. iii. 16.* Now, because evil angels will be sure to mix in all Christian assemblies, therefore should women wear the tokens of their shamefacedness and subjection, which in that age and country was a veil. Others say, because of the *good angels*. Jews and Christians have had an opinion, that these ministering Spirits are many of them present in their assemblies. Their presence should restrain Christians from all indecencies in the worship of God. Note, We should learn from all to carry it in the publick assemblies of divine worship, so as to express a reverence for God, and a content and satisfaction with that rank, in which he has placed us.

(5.) He thinks fit to guard his argument with a caution, lest the inference be carried too far, *ver. 11, 12. Nevertheless, neither is the man without the woman, nor the woman without the man in the Lord.* They were made for one another. *It is not good for him to be alone*, *Gen. ii. 18.* And therefore was a woman made, and made for the man; and the man was intended to be a comfort, and help, and defence to the woman, though not so directly and immediately made for her. They were made to be a mutual comfort and blessing. Not one a slave, and the other a tyrant. *Both were to be one flesh*, *Gen. ii. 24.* And this for the propagation of a race of mankind. They are reciprocal instruments of each other's production. As the woman was first formed out of the man, the man is ever since propagated by the woman, *ver. 12.* All by the divine wisdom and power of the first cause so ordaining it. The authority and subjection should be no greater, than is suitable to two, in such near relation, and close union to each other. Note, As it is the will of God, that the woman know *her place*, so is it his will also that the man abuse not *his power*.

(6.) He enforces his argument from the natural covering provided for the woman, *ver. 13, 14, 15. Judge in yourselves, con-*

sult your own reason, hearken to what nature suggests, *Is it comely for a woman to pray to God uncovered?* Should there not be a distinction kept up between the sexes in the wearing their hair, since nature has made one? It is not a distinction which custom has kept up among all civilized nations? The woman's hair is a natural covering, to wear it long is a glory to her: but for a man to have long hair or cherish it, is a token of softness and effeminacy. Note, It should be our concern, especially in Christian and religious assemblies, to make no breach upon the rules of natural decency.

(7.) He sums up all, by referring them who were contentious to the usages and customs of the churches, *ver. 16.* Custom is in a great measure the rule of decency. And the common practice of the churches, is what he would have them govern themselves by. He does not silence the contentious by mere authority, but lets them know, that they would appear to the world as very odd and singular in their humour, if they would quarrel for a custom, to which all the churches of Christ were at that time utter strangers, or against a custom in which they all concurred, and that upon the foot of natural decency. It was the common usage of the churches for women to appear in publick assemblies, and join in publick worship veiled, and it was manifestly decent that they should do so. They must be very contentious indeed who would quarrel with this custom, and lay it aside.

17. Now in this that I declare *unto you*, I praise you not, that you come together, not for the better, but for the worse. 18. For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. 19. For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved, may be made manifest among you. 20. When ye come together therefore into one place, *this* is not to eat the Lords supper. 21. For in eating every one taketh before *other*, his own supper: and one is hungry, and another drunken. 22. What, have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not.

In this passage the apostle sharply rebukes them for much greater disorders than the former, in their partaking of the Lord's supper, which was commonly done in the first ages, as the ancients tell us, with a love-feast annexed, which gave occasion to the scandalous disorders which the apostle here reprehends. Concerning which, observe,

(1.) The manner in which he introduces his charge. *Now in this that I declare to you, I praise you not*, *ver. 17.* I cannot commend, but must blame and condemn you. It is plain, from the beginning of the chapter, that he was willing, and pleased to commend, as far as he could. But such scandalous disorders in so sacred an institution, as they were guilty of, called for a sharp reprehension. They quite turned the institution against itself. It was intended to make them better, to promote their spiritual interests; but it really made them worse: *They came together not for the better, but the worse.* Note, That the ordinances of Christ, if they do not make us better, will be very apt to make us worse. If they do not do our souls good, they may do us harm. If they do not melt and mend, they will harden. Corruptions will be confirmed in us, if the proper means do not work a cure of them.

(2.) He enters upon his charge against them, in more particulars than one. (1.) He tells them, that upon coming together they fell into *divisions, schisms, συσματα*. Instead of concurring unanimously in celebrating the ordinance, they fell a quarrelling with one another. Note, There may be schism where there is no separation of communion. Persons may come together in the same church, and sit down at the same table of the Lord, and yet be schismatics. Uncharitableness, alienation of affection, especially if it grows up to discord and feuds, and contentions, constitute schism. Christians may separate from each others communion, and yet be charitable one towards another: they may continue in the same communion, and yet be uncharitable. This last is *schism* rather than the former. The apostle had had a report of the Corinthians divisions, and he tells them he had too much reason to believe it, for, adds he, there must be heresies also; not only quarrels, but factions, and perhaps such corrupt opinions as strike at the foundation of Christianity, and all sound religion. Note, No marvel there should be breaches of Christian love in the churches, when such offences will come as shall make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. Such offences *must come*. Not that men are necessitated to be guilty of them, but the event is certain, and God permits them, that they which are approved, such honest hearts as will bear the trial may be set to view, and appear faithful by their constant adherence to the truths and ways of God, notwithstanding the temptations of seducers. Note, The wisdom of God can make the wickedness and errors of others a foil to the piety and integrity of the saints.

(2.) He charges them not only with discord and division, but with scandalous disorder. *For in eating, every one taketh before the other, his own supper, and one is hungry, and another is drunken*, *ver. 21.* Heathens used to drink plentifully at their feasts upon their sacrifices. Many of the wealthier Corinthians seem to have taken the same liberty at the Lord's table, or at least at their *'Αγάπαι*, or *love-feasts*, that were annexed to the supper. They would not stay for one another. The rich despised the poor, and eat and drank up the provisions themselves brought, before the poor were allowed to partake; and thus some wanted, whilst others had more than enough. This was profaning a sacred institution, and corrupting a divine ordinance, to the last degree. What was appointed to feed the soul, was employed to feed their lusts and passions. What should have been a bond of mutual amity and affection, was made an instrument of discord and division. The poor are deprived of the food prepared for them, and the rich turned a feast of charity into a *debauch*. This was scandalous irregularity.

(3.) The apostle lays the blame of this conduct closely on them. (1.) By telling them, that their conduct perfectly destroyed the purpose and use of such an institution. *This is not to eat the Lord's supper*, *ver. 20.* It was coming to the Lord's table, and not coming. They had as good have stood away. Thus to eat the outward elements, was not to eat Christ's body. Note, There is such a careless and irregular eating of the Lord's supper, which is as none at all. It will turn to no account, but to increase guilt. Such an eating was that of the Corinthians. Their practices were a direct contradiction to the purposes of this sacred institution. (2.) Their conduct carried in it a contempt of God's house, or of the church, *ver. 22.* If they had a mind to feast, they might do it home in their own houses; but to come to the Lord's table, and cabal and quarrel, and keep the poor from their share of the provision there made for them as well as the rich, was such an abuse of the ordinance, and such a contempt of the poorer members of the church, more especially, as merited a very sharp rebuke. Such a behaviour tended much to the shame and discouragement of the poor, whose souls were as dear to Christ, and cost him as much as those of the rich. Note, Common meals may be managed after a common manner, but religious feasts should be attended religiously. Note also, That it is an heinous evil, and severely to be censured, for Christians to treat their fellow Christians with contempt and insolence, but especially at the Lord's table. This is doing what they can to pour contempt on divine ordinances. And we should look carefully to it, that nothing in our carriage at the Lord's table, have the appearance of contemning so sacred an institution.

23. For I have received of the Lord, that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus, the *same* night in which he was betrayed, took bread: 24. And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat; this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. 25. After the same manner also *he took* the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. 26. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lords death till he come. 27. Wherefore, whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink *this* cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. 28. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of *that* bread, and drink of *that* cup. 29. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lords body. 30. For this cause many *are* weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. 31. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. 32. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world. 33. Wherefore my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another. 34. And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come.

To rectify these gross corruptions and irregularities, the apostle sets the sacred institution here to view. This should be the rule in the reformation of all abuses.

He (1.) Tells us how he came by the knowledge of it. He was not among the apostles at the first institution. But *he had received from the Lord what he had delivered to them*, *ver. 23.* He had the knowledge of this matter by revelation from Christ. And what he had received he communicated, without varying from the truth a tittle, without adding or diminishing.

(2.) He gives us a more particular account of the institution than we meet with elsewhere. We have here an account, (1.) Of the *author*, our Lord Jesus Christ. The King of the church only has power to institute sacraments. (2.) The *time* of the institution:

institution: it was the very night wherein he was betrayed; just as he was entering on his sufferings, which are therein to be commemorated. (3.) The institution itself. Our Saviour took bread, and when he had given thanks, or blessed (as it is in St. Matthew, xxvi. 26.) he brake, and said, *Take, eat, this is my body broken for you, this do in remembrance of me: and in like manner he took the cup when he had supped, saying, This is the New Testament in my blood, this do as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me*, ver. 24, 25. In which observe,

(1.) The materials of this sacrament. Both, (1.) As to the visible signs, these are bread and the cup; the former of which is called bread many times over in this passage, even after what the papists call consecration. What is eaten is called bread, though it be at the same time said to be the body of the Lord. A plain argument that the apostle knew nothing of their monstrous and absurd doctrine of transubstantiation. The latter is as plainly a part of this institution as words can make it. St. Matthew tells us, our Lord bid them all drink of it, chap. xxvi. 27. as if he would by this expression lay in a caveat against the papists depriving the laity of the cup. Bread and the cup are both made use of, because it is an holy feast. Nor is it here or any where made necessary, that any particular liquor should be in the cup. In one evangelist indeed, it is plain, wine was the liquor used by our Saviour, though it was perhaps mingled with water according to the Jewish custom, *vid.* Lightfoot on Matt. xxvi. But this doth by no means render it unlawful to have a sacrament where persons cannot come at wine. And in every place of scripture in which we have an account of this part of institution, it is always expressed by a figure. The cup is put for what was in it, without once specifying what the liquor was, in the words of the institution. (2.) The things signified by these outward signs, and they are Christ's body and blood, his body broke, his blood shed together with all the benefits which flow from his death and sacrifice. It is the New Testament in his blood. His blood is the seal and sanction of all the privileges of the new covenant. And worthy receivers take it as such, at this holy ordinance. They have the New Testament, and their own title to all the blessings of the new covenant, confirmed to them by his blood.

(2.) We have here the sacramental actions, the manner in which the materials of the sacrament are to be used. (1.) Our Saviour's actions, which are taking the bread and cup, giving thanks, breaking the bread, and giving about both one and the other. (2.) The actions of the communicants, which were to take the bread and eat, to take the cup and drink, and both in remembrance of Christ. But the external acts are not the whole, nor the principal part of what is to be done at this holy ordinance, each of them hath a significancy. Our Saviour having undertaken to make an offering of himself to God, and procure by his death the remission of sins, with all other gospel-benefits for true believers, did at the institution deliver his body and blood, with all the benefits procured by his death, to his disciples, and continues to do the same every time the ordinance is administered to true believers. And this is here exhibited or set forth as the food of souls. And as food, though ever so wholesome or rich, will yield no nourishment without being eaten, here the communicants are to take and eat, or to receive Christ and feed upon him, his grace and benefits, and by faith convert them into nourishment to their souls. They are to take him as their Lord and life, yield themselves up to him, and live upon him. *He is our life*, Col. iii. 4.

(3.) We have here an account of the ends of this institution. (1.) It was appointed to be done in remembrance of Christ; to keep fresh in our minds an ancient favour, viz. his dying for us, as well as to remember an absent friend, even Christ interceding for us, in virtue of his death, at God's right-hand. The best of friends, and the greatest acts of kindness are here to be remembered. The motto on this ordinance, and the very meaning of it is, *When this you see, remember me*. (2.) It was to shew forth Christ's death, to declare and publish it. It is not barely in remembrance of Christ, of what he hath done and suffered, that this ordinance was instituted; but to commemorate, to celebrate his glorious condescension and grace in our redemption. We declare his death to be our life, the spring of all our comforts and hopes. And we glory in such a declaration; we shew forth his death, and spread it before God as our accepted sacrifice and ransom. We set it in view of our own faith, for our comfort and quickening; and we own before the world by this very service, that we are the disciples of Christ, who trust in him alone for salvation, and acceptance with God.

It is moreover hinted here concerning this ordinance, (1.) That it should be frequent, as often as ye eat this bread, &c. Our bodily meals return often. We cannot maintain life and health without this. And it is fit this spiritual diet should be taken often too. The ancient churches celebrated this ordinance every Lord's day, if not every day when they assembled for worship. (2.) That it must be perpetual. It is to be celebrated till the Lord shall come. Till he shall come the second time, without sin, for the salvation of them that believe, and to judge the world. This is our warrant for keeping this feast. It was our Lord's will, that we should thus celebrate the memorials of his death and passion, till

he come in his own glory, and his Father's glory, with his holy angels, and put an end to the present state of things, and his own mediatorial administration, by passing the final sentence. Note, The Lord's supper is not a temporary, but a standing and perpetual ordinance.

(3.) He lays before the Corinthians the danger of receiving unworthily: Of prostituting this institution as they did, and using it to the purposes of feasting and faction; with intentions opposite to its design, or a temper of mind altogether unsuitable to it: Or keeping up the covenant with sin and death, whilst they are there professedly renewing and confirming their covenant with God. (1.) It is great guilt which such contract. They shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, ver. 27. of violating this sacred institution; of despising his body and blood. They act as if they counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith they are sanctified, an unholy thing, Heb. ix. 26. They profane the institution, and in a manner crucify their Saviour over again. Instead of being cleansed by his blood, they are guilty of his blood. (2.) It is a great hazard they run. They eat and drink judgment to themselves, ver. 29. They provoke God, and are likely to bring down punishment on themselves. No doubt but they incur great guilt, and so render themselves liable to damnation, to spiritual judgments and eternal misery. Every sin is in its own nature damning; and therefore so heinous a sin, as profaning such an holy ordinance, to be sure is so. And it is profaned in the grossest sense, by such irreverence and rudeness as the Corinthians were guilty of. But fearful believers should not be discouraged from attending at this holy ordinance, by the sound of these words, as if they bound upon themselves the sentence of damnation by coming to the table of the Lord unprepared. This sin, as well as all others, leaves room for forgiveness upon repentance. And the holy Spirit never indited this passage of scripture to deter serious Christians from their duty, though the devil has often made this advantage of it, and robbed good Christians of their choicest comforts. The Corinthians came to the Lord's table as to a common feast, not discerning the Lord's body, i. e. not making a difference or distinction between that and common food, but setting both on a level. Nay they used much more indecency at this sacred feast, than they would have done at a civil one. This was very sinful in them, and very displeasing to God, and brought down his judgments on them. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. Some were punished with sickness, and some with death. Note, Careless and irreverent receiving the Lord's supper may bring temporal punishments. Yet the connexion seems to imply, that even those who were thus punished, were in a state of favour with God, at least many of them. They were chastened of the Lord, that they should not be condemned with the world, ver. 32. Now divine chastening is a sign of divine love. Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, Heb. xii. 6. especially with so merciful a purpose, of preventing their final condemnation. In the midst of judgment God remembers mercy. He many times punishes those whom he tenderly loves. It is kindness to use the rod to prevent the child's ruin. He will visit such iniquity as this under consideration with stripes, and yet make those stripes the evidence of his loving-kindness. They were in the favour of God, who yet so highly offended him in this instance, and brought down judgments on themselves, at least many of them were. For they were punished by him out of fatherly good-will. Punished now, that they might not perish for ever. Note, It is better to bear trouble in this world, than be miserable to eternity. And God punishes his people now, to prevent their eternal wo.

(4.) He points out the duty of those who would come to the Lord's table. (1.) In general: Let a man examine himself, ver. 28. Try and approve himself. Let him consider the sacred intention of this holy ordinance, its nature and use; and compare his own views in attending on it, and his disposition of mind for it; and when he has approved himself to his own conscience in the sight of God, then let him attend. Such self-examination is necessary to a right attendance at this holy ordinance. Note, Those who through weakness of understanding cannot try themselves, are by no means fit to eat of this bread and drink of this cup; nor those who upon a fair trial have just ground to charge themselves with impenitency, unbelief, and alienation from the life of God. They should have the wedding-garment on, who would be welcome at this marriage-feast; grace in habit, and grace in exercise. (2.) The duty of those who were yet unpunished for their profanation of this ordinance. If we would judge our selves, we should not be judged, ver. 31. If we would thoroughly search and explore our selves, and condemn and correct what we find amiss, we should prevent divine judgments. Note, To be exact and severe on our selves and our own conduct, is the properest way in the world not to fall under the just severity of our heavenly Father. We must not judge others, lest we be judged, Matt. vii. 1. but we must judge ourselves, to prevent our being judged and condemned by God. We may be critical as to ourselves, but should be very candid in judging of others.

(5.) He closes all with a caution against the irregularities of which they were guilty, ver. 33, 34. charging them to avoid all indecency at the Lord's table. They were to eat for hunger and pleasure

pleasure only at home, and not change the holy supper to a common feast, and much less eat up the provisions, before those, who could bring none, did partake of them, lest they *came together for condemnation*. Note, Our holy duties through our own abuse, may prove matter of condemnation. Christians may keep sabbaths, hear sermons, attend at sacraments, and only aggravate guilt, and bring on an heavier doom. A sad, but serious truth! Oh! let all look to it, that they do not come together at any time to God's worship, and all the while provoke him, and bring down vengeance on themselves. Holy things are to be used in an holy manner, or else they are profaned. What else was amiss in this matter, he tells them, he would rectify when he came to them.

C H A P. XII.

In this chapter the apostle, (1.) Considers the case of spiritual gifts, which were very plentifully poured out on the Corinthian church. He considers their original, that they are from God, their variety and use, that they were all intended for one and the same general end, the advancement of Christianity, and the church's edification, ver. 1—12. (2.) He illustrates this by an allusion to an human body, in which all the members have a mutual relation and subserviency, and each its proper place and use, ver. 12—27. (3.) He tells us, that the church is the body of Christ, and the members are variously gifted, for the benefit of the whole body, and each particular member, ver. 27—30. And then, (4.) Closes with an exhortation to seek somewhat more beneficial than these gifts, ver. 31.

NOW concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant. 2. Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led. 3. Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God, calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the holy Ghost. 4. Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. 6. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God, which worketh all in all. 7. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. 8. For to one is given by the Spirit, the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; 9. To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; 10. To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues. 11. But all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.

The apostle comes now to treat of *spiritual gifts*, which abounded in the church of Corinth, but were greatly abused. What these gifts were, is at large told us in the body of the chapter. extraordinary offices and powers, bestowed on ministers and Christians in the first ages, for conviction of *unbelievers*, and propagation of the gospel. Gifts and grace, *χαρίσματα* and *χάρις*, greatly differ. Both indeed were freely given of God. But where grace is given, it is for the salvation of those who have it. Gifts are bestowed for the advantage and salvation of others. And there may be great gifts where there is not a dram of grace, but persons possessed of them are utterly out of the divine favour. They are great instances of divine benignity to men, but do not by themselves prove those who have them the objects of divine complacency. This church was rich in gifts, but there were many things scandalously out of order in it. Now concerning these spiritual gifts, that is, the extraordinary powers they had received from the Spirit, the apostle,

(1.) Tells them, he would not have them ignorant, neither of their original or use. They came from God, and were to be used for him. And it would lead them far astray, if they were ignorant of one or the other of these. Note, Right information is of great use, as to all religious practice. It is wretched work gifted men make, who either do not know or not advert to the nature, and right use of the gifts, with which they are endowed.

(2.) He puts them in mind of the sad state out of which they had been recovered. *Ye were Gentiles, carried away to dumb idols, even as ye were led*, ver. 2. And whilst they were so, could have no pretensions to be spiritual men, or have spiritual gifts. Whilst they were under the conduct of the spirit of Gentilism, they could not be influenced by the Spirit of Christ. If they well understood their former condition, they could not but know,

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that all true spiritual gifts were from God. Now concerning this,

Observe, (1.) Their former character, they were Gentiles. Not God's *peculiar people*, but of the nations whom he had in a manner abandoned. The Jews were before his chosen people, distinguished from the rest of the world by his favour. To them the knowledge and worship of the true God were in a manner confined. The rest of the world were *strangers to the covenant of promise, aliens from the common-wealth of Israel*, and in a manner without God, Eph. ii. 12. Such Gentiles were the body of the Corinthians, before their conversion to Christianity. What a change was here! Christian Corinthians were once Gentiles. Note, It is of great use to the Christian, and a proper consideration to stir him up both to duty and thankfulness, to think what once he was, *ye were Gentiles*.

(2.) The conduct they were under. *Carried away to these dumb idols, even as they were led*. They were hurried upon the grossest idolatry, the worship even of stocks and stones, through the force of a vain imagination, and the fraud of their priests practising on their ignorance. For whatever were the sentiments of their philosophers, this was the practice of the herd. The body of the people paid their homage and worship to dumb idols, *that had ears but could not hear, and mouths but could not speak*, Psal. cxv. 5, 6. Miserable abjectness of mind! And those that despised these gross conceptions of the vulgar, yet countenanced them by their practice. Oh dismal state of Gentilism! Could the Spirit of God be among such stupid idolaters, or they be influenced by it! How did the prince of this world triumph in the blindness of mankind! How thick a mist had he cast over their minds!

(3.) He shews them how they might discern those gifts that were from the Spirit of God, true spiritual gifts. *No man speaking by the Spirit, calls Jesus accursed*. Thus did both Jews and Gentiles. They blasphemed him as an impostor, and execrated his name, and deemed it abominable. And yet many Jews that were exorcists and magicians, went about pretending to work wonders by the Spirit of God. *Vid. Lightfoot's Horæ in loc.* And many among the Gentiles pretended to inspiration. Now the apostle tells them, none could act under the influence, or by the power of the Spirit of God, that disowned and blasphemed Christ. For the Spirit of God bore uncontrollable witness to Christ, by prophecy, miracles, his resurrection from the dead, the success of his doctrine among men, and its effect upon them, and could never so far contradict itself, as to declare him accursed. And on the other hand, *no man could say Jesus was the Lord*, (i. e. live by this faith, and work miracles to prove it) *but it must be by the Holy Ghost*. To own this truth before men, and maintain it to the death, and live under the influence of it, could not be done without the sanctification of the Holy Ghost. No man can call Christ Lord, with a believing subjection to him, and dependence upon him, unless that faith be wrought by the Holy Ghost. No man can confess this truth in the day of trial, but by the Holy Ghost animating and encouraging him. Note, We have as necessary a dependence on the Spirit's operation and influence, for our sanctification and perseverance, as on the mediation of Christ, for our reconciliation and acceptance with God. And, no man could confirm this truth with a miracle, but by the Holy Ghost. No evil spirit would lend assistance, if it were in his power, to spread a doctrine and religion so ruinous to the devil's kingdom. The substance of what the apostle asserts and argues here, is, that whatever pretences there were to inspiration or miracles, among those who were enemies to Christianity, they could not be from the Spirit of God; but no man could believe this with his heart, or prove with a miracle that Jesus was Christ, but by the Holy Ghost. So that the extraordinary operations and powers amongst them, did all proceed from the Spirit of God. He adds,

(4.) These spiritual gifts, though proceeding from the same Spirit, are yet *divers*. They have one author and original, but are themselves of various kinds. A free cause may produce variety of effects: And the same giver may bestow various gifts, ver. 4. *their are diversity of gifts*, such as revelations, tongues, prophecy, interpretations of tongues; *but the same Spirit*. There are differences of *administrations*, or different offices, and officers to discharge them, different ordinances and institutions; see ver. 28, 29, 30. *but the same Lord*, who appointed all, ver. 6. *There are diversity of operations*, or miraculous powers, called, *ἐνεργήματα δυνάμεων*, ver. 10. as here *ἐνεργήματα*, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. There are various gifts, administrations, and operations, but all proceed from one God, one Lord, one Spirit; that is, from Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the spring and origin of all spiritual blessings and bequests. All issue from the same fountain. All have the same author. However different they may be in themselves, in this they agree; all are from God. (2.) Several of the kinds are here specified, ver. 8, 9, 10. Several persons had their several gifts, some one, some another, all from and by the same Spirit. To one was given the *word of wisdom*, i. e. say *some*, a knowledge of the mysteries of the gospel, and ability to explain them; an exact understanding of the design, nature, and doctrines of the Christian religion. Say *others*, an uttering grave sentences, like Solomon's proverbs. *Some* confine this word of wisdom to the revelations made to

and by the apostles. *To another, the word of knowledge by the same Spirit.* That is, say some, the knowledge of mysteries, chap. ii. 13. wrapped up in the prophecies, types, and histories of the Old Testament. Say others, a skill and readiness to give advice and counsel in perplexed cases. *To another, faith by the same Spirit,* i. e. the faith of miracles, or a faith in the divine power and promise, whereby they were enabled to work miracles: or, an extraordinary impulse from above, whereby they were enabled to trust God in any emergency, and go on in the way of their duty, and own and profess the truths of Christ, whatever were the difficulty or danger. *To another, the gifts of healing by the same Spirit,* viz. the sick, either by laying on hands, or anointing with oil, or with a bare word. *To another, the working of miracles;* the efficacies of powers, *ἐνεργήματα δυνάμεων;* such as raising the dead, restoring the blind to sight, giving speech to the dumb, and hearing to the deaf, and the use of limbs to the lame. *To another, prophecy;* i. e. ability to foretell future events, which is the more usual sense of prophecy; or to explain scripture by a peculiar gift of the Spirit. See chap. xiv. 24. *To another, the discerning of spirits;* power to distinguish between true and false prophets, or to discern the real and internal qualifications of any person for an office, or to discover the inward workings of the mind by the Holy Ghost, as Peter did those of Ananias, *Acts* v. 3. *To another, divers kinds of tongues;* or ability to speak languages by inspiration. *To another, the interpretation of tongues;* or ability to render foreign languages readily and properly into their own. With such variety of spiritual gifts were the first ministers and churches blessed.

(5.) The end for which these gifts were bestowed. *The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man, to profit withal,* ver. 7. The Spirit was manifested by the exercise of these gifts: His influence and interest appeared in them. But they were not distributed for the mere honour or advantage of those that had them, but for the benefit of the church, to edify the body, and spread and advance the gospel. Note, Whatever gifts God confers on any man, he confers them that he may do good with them, whether they be common or spiritual. The outward gifts of his bounty, are to be improved for his glory, and employed in doing good to others. No man has them merely for himself. They are a trust put into his hands to profit withal; and the more he profits others with them, the more abundantly will they turn to his account in the end, *Phil.* iv. 17. And spiritual gifts are bestowed, that men may with them profit the church, and promote Christianity. They are not given for shew, but for service; not for pomp and ostentation, but for edification; not to magnify those that have them, but to edify others.

(6.) The measure and proportion in which they are given. *All these worketh one and the same spirit, dividing to every man as he will.* It is according to the sovereign pleasure of the donor. What more free than gift? And shall not the Spirit of God do what he will with his own? May he not give to what persons he pleases, and in what proportion he pleases? And one gift to one man, and another to another; to one more, and another fewer, as he thinks fit? Is he not the best judge how his own purposes shall be served, and his own donatives bestowed? It is not as men will, nor as they may think fit, but as the Spirit pleases. Note, The Holy Ghost is a divine person. He works divine effects, and he divides divine gifts as he will, by his own power, and according to his own pleasure, without dependence or controul. But though he distributes these gifts free and uncontroulled, they are intended by him, not for private honour and advantage, but for publick benefit, for the edification of the body, the church.

12. For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. 13. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. 14. For the body is not one member, but many. 15. If the foot should say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? 16. And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? 17. If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? if the whole were hearing where were the smelling? 18. But now hath God set the members, every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. 19. And if they were all one member, where were the body? 20. But now are they many members, yet but one body. 21. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again, the head to the feet, I have no need of you. 22. Nay, much more those members of the body which seem to be more feeble, are necessary. 23. And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour, and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. 24. For our comely parts

have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: 25. That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. 26. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it: or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.

The apostle here makes out the truth of what was above asserted, and puts the gifted men among the Corinthians in mind of their duty, by comparing the church of Christ to a human body.

(1.) By telling us one body may have many members, and that the many members of the same body make but one body, ver. 12. And, that the body is not one member only, but many. So also is Christ, that is Christ mystical, as divines commonly speak. Christ and his church making one body, as head and members, this body is made up of many parts, or members, yet but one body. For all the members are baptized into the same body, and made to drink of the same Spirit, ver. 13. Jews and Gentiles, bond and free, are upon a level in this, all baptized into the same body, and communicate in the same Spirit. Christians become members of this body by baptism. They are baptized into one body. The outward right is of divine institution, significant of the new birth, called therefore the washing of regeneration, *Tit.* iii. 5. But it is by the Spirit, by the renewing of the Holy Ghost, that we are made members of Christ's body. It is the Spirit's operation, signified by the outward administration, that makes us members. And by communion at the other ordinance are we sustained; but then it is not merely by drinking the wine, but by drinking into one Spirit. The outward administration is a mean appointed of God for our participation in this great benefit. But it is baptism by the Spirit, it is internal renovation, and drinking into one Spirit, partaking of his sanctifying influences from time to time, that make us true members of Christ's body, and maintain our union with him. Being animated by one Spirit, makes Christians one body. Note, All who have the Spirit of Christ, without difference, are the members of Christ, whether Jew or Gentile, bond or free, and none but such. And all the members of Christ make up one body. The members many, but the body one. They are one body, because they have one principle of life. All are quickened and animated by the same Spirit.

(2.) Each member has its particular form, place, and use. (1.) The meanest member makes a part of the body. The foot and ear are less useful perhaps than the hand and eye; but because one is not an hand, and the other an eye, shall they say therefore they do not belong to the body? ver. 15, 16. So every member of the body mystical cannot have the same place and office: but what then? shall it hereupon disown relation to the body? because it is not fixed in the same station, or favoured with the same gifts as others, shall it say I do not belong to Christ? No, the meanest member of his body is as much a member as the noblest, and as truly regarded by him. All his members are dear to him. (2.) There must be a distinction of members in the body. Were the whole body eye, where were the hearing? Were the whole ear, where were the smelling? ver. 17. If all were one member, where were the body? ver. 19. They are many members, and for that reason must have distinction among them, and yet are but one body, ver. 20. One member of a body is not a body; this is made up of many, and among these many, there must be a distinction, difference of situation, shape, use, &c. So it is in the body of Christ. Its members must have different uses, and therefore have different powers, and be in different places, some having one gift, and others a different one. Variety in the members of the body contributes to the beauty of it. What a monster would a body be that were all ear, or eye, or arm? So it is for the beauty and good appearance of the church, that there should be diversity of gifts and offices in it. (3.) The disposal of members to a natural body, and their situation is as God pleases, But now hath God set the members, every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him, ver. 18. We may plainly perceive the divine wisdom in the distribution of the members; but it was made according to the counsel of his will, he distinguished and distributed them as he pleased. So is it also in the members of Christ's body. They are chosen out to such stations, and endued with such gifts as God pleases. He who is sovereign Lord of all, disposes his favours and gifts as he will. And who should gainsay his pleasure? What foundation is here for repining in ourselves, or envying others? We should be doing the duties of our own place, and not murmuring in ourselves, or quarrelling with others, that we are not in theirs. (4.) All the members of the body are in some respect useful and necessary to each other. The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee; nor the head to the feet, I have no need of you; nay, those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, (viz. the bowels, &c.) are necessary, ver. 21, 22. God has so fitted and tempered them together, that they are all necessary to one another, and to the whole body. There is no part redundant and unnecessary. Every member serves some good purpose or other. It is useful to its fellow-members, and necessary to the good state of the whole body. Nor is there a member of the body of Christ, but may and ought to be useful

useful to his fellow-members, and at some times, and in some cases, is needful to them. None should despise and envy another, seeing God has made the distinction between them as he pleased, yet so as to keep them all in some degree of mutual dependence, and make them valuable to each other, and concerned for each other, because of their mutual usefulness. Those who excel in any one gift, cannot say they have no need of them who in that gift are their inferiors, whilst perhaps in other gifts they exceed them. Nay, the lowest members of all have their use, and the highest cannot do well without them. *The eye hath need of the hand, and the head of the feet.* (5.) Such is the man's concern for his whole body, *that on the less honourable members more abundant honour is bestowed, and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness.* Those parts which are not fit, like the rest, to be exposed to view; that are either deformed, or shameful, we most carefully clothe and cover; whereas the comely parts have no such need. The wisdom of providence hath so contrived and tempered things, that the more abundant regard and honour should be paid to that which most wanted it, *ver. 24.* So should the members of Christ's body carry it towards their fellow-members, instead of despising them, or reproaching them for their infirmities, they should endeavour to cover and conceal them, and put the best face upon them that they can. (6.) Divine wisdom has contrived and ordered things in this manner, that the members of the body should not be schismatics, divided from each other, and acting upon separate interests, but well affected to each other; tenderly concerned for each other, having a fellow-feeling of each other's griefs, and a communion in each other's pleasures and joys, *ver. 25, 26.* God has tempered the members of the body natural in the manner mentioned, that *there might be no schism in the body,* *ver. 25.* no rupture or disunion among the members, nor so much as the least mutual disregard. This should be avoided also in the spiritual body of Christ. There should be no schism in this body: but the members should be closely united by the strongest bonds of love. All decays of this affection are the seeds of schism. Where Christians grow cold towards each other, they will be careless and unconcerned for each other. And this mutual disregard is a schism begun. The members of the natural body are made to have a care and concern for each other, to prevent a schism in it. So should it be in Christ's body: the members should sympathize with each other. As in the natural body, the pain of the one part afflicts the whole, the ease and pleasure of one part affects the whole; so should Christians reckon themselves honoured in the honours of their fellow-Christians, and should suffer in their sufferings. Note, Christian sympathy is a great branch of Christian duty. We should be so far from slighting our brethren's sufferings, that we should suffer with them; so far from envying their honours, that we should rejoice in them, and reckon ourselves honoured by them.

27. Now are ye the body of Christ, and members in particular. 28. And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. 29. *Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles?* 30. Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret? 31. But covet earnestly the best gifts: And yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.

Here the apostle sums up the argument, and applies this similitude to the church of Christ. Concerning which, observe (1.) The relation wherein Christians stand to Christ, and one another. The church, or whole collective body of Christians in all ages, is his body. Every Christian is a member of this body, and every other Christian stands related to him as a fellow-member, *ver. 27.* Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular, or particular members. Each is a member of the body, not the whole body; each stands related to the body as a part of it, and all have a common relation to one another, dependence upon one another, and should have a mutual care and concern. Thus are the members of the natural body, thus should the members of the mystical body be disposed. Note, That mutual indifference, and much more contempt, and hatred, and envy, and strife, are very unnatural in Christians. It is like the members of the same body being destitute of all concern for one another, or quarrelling with each other. This is the apostle's scope in this argument. He endeavours in it to suppress the proud, and vaunting, and contentious spirit that had prevailed among the Corinthians, by reason of their spiritual gifts. (2.) The variety of offices instituted by Christ, and gifts or favours dispensed by him, *ver. 28.* God hath set some in the church, first apostles, the chief ministers intrusted with all the powers necessary to found a church, and make an entire revelation of God's will. Secondarily prophets, or persons enabled by inspiration to prophecy, or interpret scripture, or write by inspiration as the evangelists did. Thirdly teachers, those who labour in the word and doctrine, whether with pastoral charge, or without it. After that miracles, or miracle-workers. Then gifts of healing, or those who had power to heal diseases. Helps, or such as had

compassion on the sick and weak, and ministered to them. Governments, or such as had the disposal of the charitable contributions of the church, and dealt them out to the poor. Diversities of tongues, or such as could speak divers languages. Concerning all which, observe,

(1.) The plenteous variety of these gifts and offices. What a multitude are they. A good God was free in his communications to the primitive church. He was no niggard of his benefits and favours. No, he provided richly for them. They had no want, but a store; all that was necessary, and even more, what was convenient for them too. (2.) Observe the order of these offices and gifts. They are here placed in their proper ranks. Those of most value have the first place. Apostles, prophets, and teachers, were all intended to instruct the people, to inform them well in the things of God, and promote their spiritual edification. Without them neither evangelical knowledge nor holiness could have been promoted. But the rest, however fitted to answer the great intentions of Christianity, had no such immediate regard to religion strictly so called. Note, God doth, and we should value things according to their real worth; and the use of things is the best criterion of their real worth. Those are most valuable, that best answer the highest purposes. Such were apostolical powers, compared with theirs, who had only the gift of healing and miracles. What holds the last and lowest rank in this enumeration, is *diversity of tongues.* It is by itself the most useless and insignificant of all these gifts. To heal diseases, relieve the poor, help the sick, have their use: but how vain a thing is it to speak languages, if a man does it merely to amuse, or boast himself? This may indeed raise the admiration, but cannot promote the edification of the hearers; nor do them any good. And yet it is manifest from *chap. xiv.* that the Corinthians valued themselves exceedingly on this gift. Note, How proper a method it is to beat down pride, to let persons know the true value of what they pride themselves in. It is but too common a thing for men to value themselves most on what is least worth. And it is of great use to bring them to a sober mind, by letting them know how much they are mistaken. (3.) The several distribution of these gifts, not all to one, nor to every one alike. All members and officers had not the same rank in the church, nor the same endowments, *ver. 29, 30.* *Are all apostles? are all prophets, &c.?* This were to make the church a monster, all one as if the body were all ear or all eye. Some are fit for one office and employment, and some for another. And the Spirit distributes to every one as he will. We must be content with our own rank and share, if it be lower and less than that of others. We must not be conceited of ourselves, and despise others, if we are in higher rank, and have greater gifts. Every member of the body is to preserve its own rank, and do its own office. And all are to minister to one another, and promote the good of the body in general, without envying, or despising, or neglecting, or ill-using any one particular member. How blessed a constitution were the Christian church, if all the members did their duty!

He closes this chapter with an advice, as the generality read it, and an hint. (1.) An advice to covet the best gifts, *χαρίσματα κρείττωτα, Dona potiora, præstantiora,* either the most valuable in themselves, or the most serviceable to others: and these are in truth most valuable in themselves, though men may be apt to esteem those most, that will raise their fame and esteem highest. Those are truly best, by which God will be most honoured, and his church edified. Such gifts should be most earnestly coveted. Note, We should desire that most which is best, and most worth. Grace is therefore to be preferred before gifts, and of gifts those are to be preferred which are of greatest use. But some read this passage, not as an advice, but a charge, *ζηλᾶτε,* ye are envious at each other's gifts. *Chap. xiii.* 4. the same word is thus translated. You quarrel and contend about them. This they certainly did. And this behaviour the apostle here reprehends, and labours to rectify. Only of pride cometh contention. These contests in the church of Corinth sprung from this original. It was a quarrel about precedency. (As most quarrels among Christians are, with whatever pretences they are gilded over.) And it is no wonder, that a quarrel for precedency should extinguish charity. When all would stand in the first rank, no wonder if they jostle, or throw down, or thrust back their brethren. Gifts may be valued for their use, but they are mischievous when made the fuel of pride and contention. This therefore the apostle endeavours to prevent. (2.) By giving them the hint of a more excellent way, viz. of charity, of mutual love and good-will. This was the only right way to quiet and cement them, and make their gifts turn to the advantage and edification of the church. This would render them kind to each other, and concerned for each other, and therefore calm their spirits, and put an end to their little piques and contests, their disputes about precedency. They would appear to be in the foremost rank, according to the apostle, who had most of true Christian love. Note, True charity is greatly to be preferred to the most glorious gifts. To have the heart glow with mutual love, is vastly better than to glare with the most pompous titles, offices, or powers.

C H A P. XIII.

In this chapter the apostle goes on to shew more particularly what that more excellent way was, of which he had just before been speaking. He (1.) Recommends it by shewing the necessity, and importance of it, ver. 1—4. (2.) By giving a description of the properties and fruits, ver. 4—8. (3.) By shewing how much it excels the best of gifts and other graces, by its continuance, when they shall be no longer in being, or of any use, ver. 8, ad fin.

1. **T**HOUGH I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. 2. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have no charity, I am nothing. 3. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

Here the apostle shews, what more excellent way he meant, or had in view in the close of the former chapter, viz. charity, or as it is commonly elsewhere rendered love, ἀγάπη. Not what is meant by charity in our common use of the word, which most men understand of almsgiving; but love in its fullest and most extensive meaning. True love to God and man. A benevolent disposition of mind towards our fellow-Christians, growing out of sincere and fervent devotion to God. This living principle of all duty and obedience, is the more excellent way, of which the apostle speaks: Preferable to all gifts. Nay, without this the most glorious gifts are nothing; of no account to us, of no esteem in the sight of God. He instances,

(1.) *In the gift of tongues. Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become a sounding brass, and a tinkling cymbal, ver. 1.* Could a man speak all the languages on earth, and that with the greatest propriety, elegance, or fluency; could he talk like an angel, and yet be without charity, it would be all empty noise, mere unharmonious and useless sound, that would neither profit nor delight. It is not talking freely, nor finely, nor learnedly of the things of God, that will save ourselves or profit others, if we are destitute of holy love. It is the charitable heart, not the voluble tongue, that is acceptable with God. The apostle instances first in this gift, because hereupon the Corinthians seemed chiefly to value themselves, and despise their brethren.

(2.) *In prophecy, and the understanding of mysteries, and all knowledge. This without charity is as nothing, ver. 2.* Had a man never so clear an understanding of the prophecies and types under the old dispensation, never so accurate a knowledge of the doctrines of Christianity, nay and this by inspiration, from the infallible dictates and illumination of the Spirit of God, without charity he would be nothing. All this would stand him in no stead. Note, A clear and deep head, is of no signification without a benevolent and charitable heart. It is not great knowledge, that God sets a value upon, but true and hearty devotion and love.

(3.) *In miraculous faith, the faith of miracles, or the faith by which persons were enabled to work miracles. Had I all faith (the utmost degree of this kind of faith) that I could remove mountains, (or say to them, go hence into the midst of the sea, and have my command obeyed, Mark xi. 23.) and had no charity, I am nothing.* The most wonder-working faith, to which nothing is in a manner impossible, is itself nothing without charity. Moving mountains is a great achievement in the account of men. But one dram of charity is in God's account of much greater worth than all the faith of this sort in the world. They may do many wondrous works in Christ's name, whom yet he will disown and bid depart from him as workers of iniquity, Matth. vii. 22. Saving faith is ever in conjunction with charity, but the faith of miracles may be without it.

(4.) *He instances in the outward acts of charity: Bestowing his goods to feed the poor, ver. 3.* Should all a man hath be laid out in this manner, if he had no charity, it would profit nothing. There may be an open and lavish hand, where there is no liberal and charitable heart. The external act of giving alms may proceed from a very ill principle. Vain-glorious ostentation, or a proud conceit of merit, may put a man to large expence this way, who has no true love to God or men. Our doing good to others will do none to us, if it be not well done, viz. from a principle of devotion and charity, love to God and good-will to men. Note, If we leave charity out of religion, the most costly services will be of no avail to us. If we give away all we have, whilst we withhold the heart from God, it will not profit.

(5.) *He instances even in sufferings, and those of the most grievous kind. If we give our body to be burnt, without charity,*

it profiteth nothing, ver. 3. Should we sacrifice our lives for the faith of the gospel, and be burnt to death in maintenance of its truth, this will stand us in no stead without charity, unless we are animated to these sufferings by a principle of true devotion to God, and sincere love to his church and people, and good-will to mankind. The outward carriage may be plausible, when the invisible principle is very bad. Some men have thrown themselves into the fire to procure a name and reputation amongst men. It is possible, that the very same principle may have worked up some to resolution enough to die for their religion, who never heartily believed and embraced it. But vindicating our religion at the cost of our lives, will profit nothing, if we feel not the power of it. And true charity is the very heart and spirit of religion. If we feel none of its sacred heat in our hearts, it will profit nothing, though we be burnt to ashes for the truth. Note, The most grievous sufferings, the most costly sacrifices, will not recommend us to God, if we do not love the brethren; should we give our own bodies to be burnt, it would not profit us. How strange a way of recommending themselves to God are they got into, who hope to do it by burning others, by murdering and mauling, and tormenting their fellow-Christians; or, by any injurious usage of them! *My soul, enter not thou into their secrets.* If I cannot hope to recommend myself to God, by giving mine own body to be burnt whilst I have no charity; I will never hope to do it by burning or maltreating others, in open defiance to all charity.

4. Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, 5. Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, 6. Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth: 7. Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

The apostle gives us in these verses some of the properties and effects of charity; both to describe and commend it; that we may know whether we have this grace, and that if we have not, we may fall in love with what is so exceeding amiable, and rest not till we have obtained it. It is an excellent grace, and has a world of good properties belonging to it. As,

(1.) It is long-suffering, μακροθυμεῖ. It can endure evil, and injury, and provocation, without being filled with resentment, indignation, or revenge. It makes the mind firm, gives it power over the angry passions, and furnishes it with a persevering patience, that shall rather wish and wait for the reformation of a brother, than fly out in resentment of his carriage. It will put up many slights and neglects from the person it loves, and wait long to see the kindly effects of such patience on him.

(2.) It is kind, χρησέμεται. It is benign, bountiful. It is courteous and obliging. *The law of kindness is in her lips.* Her heart is large, and her hand open. She is apt to shew favour, and to do good. She seeks to be useful, and not only seizes on opportunities of doing good, but searches for them. This is her general character. She is patient under injuries, and apt and inclined to do all good offices in her power. And under these two generals all the particulars of the character may be reduced.

(3.) Charity suppresses envy. *It envieth not.* It is not grieved at the good of others. Nether at their gifts nor good qualities, nor honours, nor estates. If we love our neighbour, we shall be so far from envying his welfare, or being displeased with it, that we shall share in it, and rejoice at it. His bliss and satisfaction will be an addition to ours, instead of impairing or lessening it. This is the proper effect of kindness and benevolence. Envy is the effect of ill-will. The prosperity of those to whom we wish well, can never grieve us. And the mind which is bent on doing good to all, can never wish ill to any.

(4.) Charity subdues pride and vain-glory. *It vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up;* is not bloated with self-conceit, does not swell upon its acquisitions, not arrogate to itself that honour or power, or respect, which doth not belong to it. It is not insolent, apt to despise others, or trample on them, or treat them with contempt and scorn. They that are animated with a principle of true brotherly love, will in honour prefer one another, Rom. xii. 10. They will do nothing out of a spirit of contention, or vain-glory, but in lowliness of mind will esteem others better than themselves, Phil. ii. 3. True love will give us an esteem of our brethren, raise our value for them; and this will limit our esteem of ourselves, and prevent the tumours of self-conceit and arrogance. These ill qualities can never grow out of tender affection for the brethren, or a diffusive benevolence. The word rendered in our translation *vaunteth itself*, bears other significations, nor is the proper meaning, as I can find, settled, but in every sense and meaning true charity stands in opposition to it. The Syriack renders it *non tumultuatur*, does not raise tumults and disturbances. Charity calms the angry passions, instead of raising them. Others render it *non perperam & perversè agit*. It does not act insidiously with any, seek to ensnare them, nor tease them with needless importunities and addresses. It is not froward, nor stubborn and untractable, nor apt to be cross and contradictory.

contradictory. Some understand it of dissembling and flattery, when a fair face is put on, and fine words said without any regard to truth or intention of good. Charity abhors such falsehood and flattery. Nothing is commonly more pernicious, nor apt to cross the purposes of true love and good-will.

(5.) Charity is careful, not to pass the bounds of decency; *ἐν ὀφθαλμοῖς*. *It becometh not unseemly.* It acts nothing indecorous, nothing that in the common account of men is base or vile. It does nothing out of place or time; but carries it towards all men, as becomes their rank and ours; with reverence and respect to superiors, with kindness and condescension to inferiors, with courtesy and good-will towards all men. It is not for breaking order, confounding ranks, bringing all men on a level, but for keeping up the distinction God has made between men, and acting decently in its own station, and minding its own business, without taking upon it to mend, or censure, or despise the conduct of others. Charity would do nothing that misbecomes it.

(6.) Charity is an utter enemy to selfishness. *Seeketh not her own.* Doth not *inordinately* desire, or seek its own praise, or honour, or profit, or pleasure. Indeed *self-love*, in some degree, is natural to all men, enters their very constitution. And a reasonable love of self, is by our Saviour made the measure of our love to others, that charity which is here described. *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* The apostle doth not mean that charity destroys *all* regard to self. He does not mean, that the charitable man should never challenge what is his own, but utterly neglect himself and all his interests. Charity must then root up that principle which is wrought into our nature. But charity never seeks its *own* to the *hurt* of others, or with the *neglect* of others. It *many times* neglects its own for the sake of others, prefers their welfare, and satisfaction, and advantage to its own. And it ever prefers the weal of the publick, of the community, whether *civil* or *ecclesiastical*, to its private advantage. It would not advance, or aggrandize, or enrich, or gratify itself, at the cost and damage of the publick.

(7.) It tempers and restrains the passions. *Ὁυ παροξύνεται*, is not exasperated. It corrects a sharpness of temper, sweetens and softens the mind, so that it doth not suddenly conceive, nor long continue a vehement passion. Where the fire of love is kept in, the flames of wrath will not easily kindle, nor long keep burning. Charity will never be angry without a cause, and will endeavour to confine the passion within proper limits, that it do not exceed the measure that is just, either in degree or duration. Anger cannot rest in the bosom where love reigns. It is hard to be angry with those we love, but very easy to drop our resentments, and be reconciled.

(8.) Charity *thinks no evil.* It cherishes no malice, nor gives way to revenge. So *some* understand it. It is not soon, nor long angry, but it is never mischievous nor inclined to revenge. It does not suspect evil of others, *ἐ λογίζεται κακόν*, it doth not reason out evil, charge guilt upon them by inference and *innuendo*, when nothing of this sort appears open. True love is not apt to be jealous and suspicious. It will hide appearing faults, and draw a veil over them, instead of hunting and raking out those that lie covered and concealed. It will never indulge suspicions without proofs, but rather incline to darken and disbelieve evidence against the person it affects. It will difficultly give into an ill opinion of another, and do it with regret and reluctance when the evidence cannot be resisted, and then to be sure will never be forward to suspect ill, and reason itself into a bad opinion upon mere appearances, or give way to suspicion without any. It will not make the worst construction of things, but put the best face that it can on circumstances that have no good appearance.

(9.) The matter of its joy and pleasure is here suggested:

(1.) Negatively, *It rejoiceth not in iniquity.* It takes no pleasure in doing injury or hurt to any. It thinketh not evil of any without very clear proof, it wishes ill to none, much less will it hurt or wrong any, and least of all make this the matter of its delight, rejoice in doing harm and mischief. Nor will it rejoice at the faults and failings of others, and triumph over them; either out of *pride* or *ill-will*, because it will set off its own excellencies, or gratify its spite. The sins of others are rather the grief of a charitable spirit than its sport or delight. They will touch it to the quick, and stir all its compassion, but can give it no entertainment. It is the very height of malice, to take pleasure in the misery of a fellow-creature. And is not falling into sin the greatest calamity that can befall one? How inconsistent is this with Christian charity, to *rejoice* at such fall?

(2.) Affirmatively, *It rejoiceth in the truth*; is glad of the success of the gospel, commonly called *the truth*, by way of *emphasis*, in the New Testament, and rejoices to see men moulded into an evangelical temper by it, and made good. It takes no pleasure in their sins, but is highly delighted to see them do well, to approve themselves men of probity and integrity. It gives it much satisfaction to see truth and justice prevail amongst men, innocency cleared, and mutual faith and trust established, and to see piety and true religion flourish.

(10.) *It beareth all things, it endureth all things, πάντα σέβει, πάντα ὑπομένει.* Some read the first, *covers all things.* So the original also signifies. *Charity will cover a multitude of sins,*

1 Pet iv. 8. It will draw a veil over them, as far as it can in consistence with duty. It is not for blazing and publishing the faults of a brother, till duty manifestly demands it. Necessity only can extort this from the charitable mind. Though such a man may be free to tell his brother his faults in private, he is very unwilling to expose him by making them publick. Thus we do by our own faults, and thus charity would teach us to do by the faults of others, not publish them to their shame and reproach, but cover them from publick notice, as long as we can, and be faithful to God and to others. Or it *beareth all things*, will pass by and put up injuries without indulging to anger, or cherishing revenge. Will be patient upon provocation and long patient, *πάντα ὑπομένει*; holds firm, though it be much shocked, and borne hard upon: Sustains all manner of injury and ill usage, and bears up under it, such as curses, contumacies, slanders, prison, exile, bonds, torments, and death itself, for the sake of the injurious, and of others; and perseveres in this firmness. Note, What a fortitude and firmness fervent love will give the mind. What cannot a lover endure from the beloved, and for his sake? How many slights and injuries will he put up, how many hazards will he run, and how many difficulties encounter?

(11.) Charity believes and hopes well of others. *Believeth all things, hopeth all things.* Indeed, charity doth by no means destroy prudence, and out of mere simplicity and silliness, *believe every word*, Prov. xiv. 17. Wisdom may dwell with love, and charity be cautious. But it is apt to believe well of all, to entertain a good opinion of them when there is no appearance to the contrary; nay, to believe well when there may be some dark appearances, if the evidence of ill be not clear. All charity is full of candor, apt to make the best of every thing, and put on it the best face and appearance: It will judge well, and believe well as far as it can with any reason; and rather stretch its faith beyond appearances for the support of a kind opinion. But it will go into a bad one with utmost reluctance, and fence against it as much as it fairly and honestly can. And when in spite of inclination it cannot believe well of others, it will yet *hope well*, and continue to hope as long as there is any ground for it. It will not presently conclude a case desperate, but wishes the amendment of the worst of men, and is very apt to hope for what it wishes. How well natured and amiable a thing is Christian charity? How lovely a mind is that which is tinged throughout with such benevolence, has it diffused over its whole frame? Happy the man who has this heavenly fire glowing in his heart, flowing out of his mouth, and diffusing its warmth over all with whom he has to do! How lovely a thing would Christianity appear to the world, if those that profess it, were more acted and animated by this divine principle, and paid a due regard to a command on which its blessed author laid a chief stress. *A new commandment give I to you that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another*, John xiii. 34. *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples*, ver. 35. *Blessed Jesus!* how few of thy professed disciples are to be distinguished and marked out by this characteristick!

8. Charity never faileth: but whether *there be* prophecies, they shall fail; whether *there be* tongues, they shall cease; whether *there be* knowledge, it shall vanish away. 9. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. 10. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. 11. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. 12. For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. 13. And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

Here the apostle goes on to commend charity, and shew how much it is preferable to the gifts, on which the Corinthians were so apt to pride themselves, to the utter neglect, and almost extinction of charity. This he makes out,

(1.) From its longer continuance and duration. *Charity never faileth.* It is a permanent and perpetual grace, lasting as eternity. Whereas the extraordinary gifts on which the Corinthians valued themselves, were of a short continuance. They were only to edify the church on earth, and that but for a time, not during its whole continuance in this world; but in heaven would be all superseded, which yet is the very seat and element of love. *Prophecy must fail*, i. e. either the prediction of things to come, which is its most common sense, or the interpretation of scripture by immediate inspiration. *Tongues will cease*, i. e. the miraculous power of speaking languages without learning them. There will be but one language in heaven. There is no confusion of tongues in the region of perfect tranquillity. And *knowledge will vanish away.* Not that in the perfect state above, holy and happy souls shall be unknowing, ignorant. It is a very poor happiness, that can consist with utter ignorance. The apostle is plainly speaking of miraculous gifts, and therefore of knowledge

to be had out of the common way; see *chap. xiv. 6.* a knowledge of mysteries supernaturally communicated. Such knowledge was to vanish away. Some indeed understand it of common knowledge acquired by instruction, taught and learnt. This way of knowing is to vanish away, though the knowledge itself once acquired, will not be lost. But it is plain the apostle is here setting the grace of charity in opposition to supernatural gifts. And it is more valuable, because more durable. It shall last when they shall be no more. It shall enter into heaven, where they will have no place, because they will be of no use. Though, in a sense, even our common knowledge may be said to cease in heaven, by reason of the improvement that will then be made in it. The light of a candle is perfectly obscured by the sun shining in its strength.

(2.) He hints, that these gifts are only adapted to a state of imperfection. *We know in part, and we prophesy in part,* ver. 9. Our best knowledge, and our greatest abilities, are at present like our condition, narrow and temporary. Even the knowledge they had by inspiration was but in part. How little a portion of God, and the unseen world, was heard even by apostles and inspired men? How much short do others come of them? But these gifts were fitted to the present imperfect state of the church, valuable in themselves, but not to be compared with charity, because they were to vanish with the imperfections of the church, nay, and long before, whereas charity was to last for ever.

(3.) He takes occasion from hence, to shew how much better it will be with the church hereafter, than it can be here. A state of perfection is in view, ver. 10. *When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part, shall be done away.* When the end is once attained, the means will of course be abolished. There will be no need of tongues, and prophecy, and inspired knowledge in a future life, because then the church will be in a state of perfection, complete both in knowledge and holiness. God will be known then clearly, and in a manner by intuition, and as perfectly as the glorified minds capacity will allow, not by such transient glimpses, and little portions, as here. The difference between these two states, is here pointed at in two particulars. (1.) The present state is a state of *childhood*, the future that of *manhood*. When I was a child, I spake as a child, (*i. e.* as some think, spake with tongues) I understood as a child, *ἐφessον, sapiebam, (i. e.* I prophesied, I was taught the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, in such an extraordinary way, as manifested I was not got out of my childish state) I thought, or reasoned, *ἐλογίζομην, as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.* Such is the difference between earth and heaven. What narrow views, what confused and indistinct notions of things have children in comparison of grown men? And how naturally do men, when reason is ripened and matured, despise and evacuate their infant thoughts, put them away, reject them, esteem them as nothing? Thus shall we think of our most valued gifts and acquisitions in this world, when we come to heaven. We shall despise our childish folly, in priding ourselves in such things, when we are grown up to men in Christ. (2.) Things are all dark and confused now, in comparison of what they will be hereafter. *Now we see through a glass darkly, (ἐν ἀνιγμᾷ, in a riddle) then face to face; now we know in part, but then we shall know as we are known.* Now, we can only discern things at a great distance as through a telescope, and that involved in clouds and obscurity: but hereafter the things to be known will be near and obvious, open to our eyes; and our knowledge will be free from all obscurity and error. God is to be seen *face to face*, and we are to know him, as we are known by him. Not indeed as perfectly, but in some sense in the same manner. We are known to him by mere inspection. He turns his eye towards us, and sees, and searches throughout. We shall then fix our eye on him, and see him as he is, 1 John iii. 2. we shall know how we are known, enter into all the mysteries of divine love and grace. Oh glorious change! to pass from darkness to light, from cloud to the clear sun-shine of our Saviour's face, and in God's own light to see light! *Psal. xxxvi. 9.* Note, It is the light of heaven only, that will remove all clouds and darkness from the face of God. It is at best but twilight whilst we are in this world, there it will be perfect and eternal day.

(4.) To sum up the excellencies of charity, he prefers it not only to gifts, but to other graces, to faith and hope, ver. 13. *And now abideth faith, hope, and charity, but the greatest of these is charity.* True grace is much more excellent than any spiritual gifts whatever. And faith, hope, and love, are the three principal graces, of which charity is the chief, being the end to which the other two are but means. This is the divine nature, the soul's felicity, or it is complacential rest in God, and holy delight in all his saints. And it is everlasting work, when faith and hope shall be no more. Faith fixes on the divine revelation, and assents to that; hope fastens on future felicity, and waits for that: and in heaven faith will be swallowed up of vision, and hope of fruition. There is no room to believe and hope, when we see and enjoy. But love fastens on the divine perfections themselves, and the divine image on the creatures, and our mutual relation both to God and them. These will all shine forth in the most glorious splendors in another world, and there will love be made perfect. There we shall perfectly love God, because he

will appear perfectly amiable for ever, and our hearts will kindle at the sight, and glow with perpetual devotion. And there shall we perfectly love one another, when all the saints meet there, when none but saints are there, and saints made perfect. Oh blessed state! how much surpassing the best below. Oh amiable and excellent grace of charity! how much doth it exceed the most valuable gifts, when it outshines every grace, and is the everlasting consummation of them! When faith and hope are at an end, true charity will burn for ever with the brightest flame. Note, They border most upon the heavenly state and perfection, whose hearts are fullest of this divine principle, and burn with the most fervent charity. It is the surest offspring of God, and bears his fairest impression. For God is love, 1 John iv. 8, 16. And where God is to be seen as he is, and face to face, there charity is in its greatest height, there, and there only, will it be perfected.

C H A P. XIV.

In this chapter the apostle directs them about the use of their spiritual gifts, preferring those most that are best, and fitted to do the greatest good. (1.) He begins with advising them of all spiritual gifts to prefer prophesying, and shews this is much better than speaking with tongues, ver. 1—6. (2.) He goes on to shew them how unprofitable the foreign languages was, and useless to the church; it is like piping in one tone, like sounding a trumpet without any certain note, like talking gibberish, whereas gifts should be used for the good of the church, ver. 6—15. (3.) He advises that worship should be celebrated so as the most ignorant might understand and join in prayer and praise, and prescribes the advice by his own example, ver. 15—21. (4.) He informs them, that tongues were a sign for unbelievers rather than those that believe; and represents the advantage of prophecy above speaking with tongues, from the different suggestions they would give to the mind of an unbeliever coming into their assemblies, ver. 21—26. (5.) Blames them for the disorder and confusion they had brought into the assembly by their vanity and ostentation of their gifts, directs them using their gifts both of tongues and prophecy, ver. 26—34. (6.) Forbids women speaking in the church, and closes this subject by requiring to perform every thing in the publick worship with order and decency, ver. 34. ad fin.

1. FOLLOW after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy. 2. For he that speaketh in an *unknown* tongue, speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries. 3. But he that prophesieth, speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort. 4. He that speaketh in an *unknown* tongue, edifieth himself: but he that prophesieth, edifieth the church. 5. I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth, than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying.

The apostle, in the foregoing chapter, had himself preferred, and advised the Corinthians to prefer, Christian charity to all spiritual gifts. Here he teaches them, among spiritual gifts which they should prefer, and by what rules they should make comparison. He begins the chapter,

(1.) With an exhortation to charity, ver. 1. *Follow after charity, pursue it.* The original *διώκετε*, when spoken of a thing, signifies a singular concern to obtain it; and is commonly taken in a good and laudable sense. It is an exhortation to obtain charity, to get this excellent disposition of mind upon any terms, whatever pains or prayers it may cost; *q. d.* in whatever you fail, see you do not amiss of this: the principle of all graces is worth your getting at any rate.

(2.) He directs them which spiritual gift to prefer, from a principle of charity. *Desire spiritual gifts, but rather that you may prophesy, or chiefly that you may prophesy.* Whilst they were in close pursuit of charity, and made this Christian disposition their chief scope, they might be zealous of spiritual gifts, be ambitious of them in some measure, but especially of *prophesying*, *i. e.* of interpreting scripture. This preference would most plainly discover that they were indeed upon such pursuit, that they had a due value for Christian charity, and were intent upon it. Note, gifts are fit objects of our desire and pursuit, in subordination to grace and charity. That should be sought first, and with greatest earnestness, which is most worth.

(3.) He designs the reasons of this preference. And it is remarkable here, that he only compares *prophesying* with *speaking with tongues*. It seems, this was the gift, on which the Corinthians principally valued themselves. This was more ostentatious than the plain interpretation of scripture; more fit to gratify pride, but less fit to pursue the purposes of Christian charity. It would not equally edify, or do good to the souls of men. For,

(1.) He

(1.) He that spake with tongues, must wholly speak between God and himself; for whatever mysteries might be communicated in his language, none of his own countrymen could understand them, because they did not understand the language, *ver. 2.* Note, What cannot be understood, can never edify. No advantage can be reaped from the most excellent discourses, if delivered in unintelligible language, such as the audience can neither speak nor understand. But he that prophesies, speaks to the advantage of his hearers. They may profit by his gift. Interpretation of scripture will be for their edification. They may be exhorted and comforted by it, *ver. 3.* And indeed these two must go together. Duty is the proper way to comfort. And they that would be comforted must bear being exhorted. (2.) He that speaks with *tongues may edify himself*, *ver. 4.* he may understand, and be affected with what he speaks. And so every minister should. And he that is most edified himself, is in the best disposition and fitness to do good to others, by what he speaks. But he that speaks with tongues, or language unknown, can only edify himself. Others can reap no benefit from his speech. Whereas the end of speaking in the church, is to *edify the church*, *ver. 4.* To which prophesying, or interpreting scripture by inspiration, or otherwise, is immediately adapted. Note, That is the best and most eligible gift, which best answers the purposes of charity, and does most good. Not that which can edify ourselves only, but that which will edify the church. Such is prophesying, or preaching, and interpreting scripture, compared with speaking in an unknown tongue.

Indeed, no gift is to be despised, but the best are to be preferred. *I could wish, saith the apostle, that ye all spoke with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied*, *ver. 5.* Every gift of God is a favour from God, and may be improved for his glory, and as such is to be valued and thankfully received. But then those are to me most valued, that are most useful. *Greater is he that prophesieth, than he that speaks with tongues, unless he interpret, that the church may receive edifying*, *ver. 5.* Benevolence makes a man truly great. *It is more blessed to give than receive.* And it is true magnanimity to study and seek to be useful to others, rather than to raise their admiration, and draw their esteem. Such a man has a large soul, copious and diffused in proportion to his benevolence, and bent of mind for publick good. Greater is he that interprets scripture to *edify the church*, than he that speaks tongues to *recommend himself*. And what other end he that spake with tongues could have, unless he interpreted what he spake, is not easy to see. Note, That makes most for the honour of a minister, that is most for the church's edification, not what shews his gifts to most advantage. He acts in a narrow sphere whilst he aims at himself, but his spirit and character increase in proportion to his usefulness, I mean his own intention and endeavours to be useful.

6. Now brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine? 7. And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped? 8. For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle? 9. So likewise you, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air. 10. There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification. 11. Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh, a barbarian; and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me. 12. Even so ye, for as much as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church. 13. Wherefore let him that speaketh in an *unknown* tongue, pray that he may interpret. 14. For if I pray in an *unknown* tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful.

In this paragraph he goes on to shew how vain a thing the ostentation of speaking unknown and unintelligible language must be. It was altogether unedifying and unprofitable, *ver. 6.* *If I come to you speaking with tongues, what will it profit you? unless I speak to you by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine?* It would signify nothing to utter any of these in an unknown tongue. An apostle, with all his furniture, could not edify, unless he spoke to the capacity of his hearers. New revelations, the most clear explications of old ones, the most instructive discourses in themselves, would be unprofitable in a language not understood. Nay interpretations of scripture made in an unknown tongue, would need to be interpreted over again, before they could be of any use. This he illustrates by several allusions. (1.) To a pipe and a harp playing always in one tone. Of what use can this be to those that are dancing? If there be

no distinction of sounds, how should they order their steps or motions? Unintelligible language is like piping or harping without distinction of sounds. It gives no more direction how a man should order his conversation, than a pipe with but one stop, or an harp with but one string, can direct a dancer how he should order his steps, *ver. 7.* (2.) To a trumpet giving an *uncertain sound*, *ἀσάλον φωνήν*, a sound not manifest; either not the proper sound for the purpose, or not distinct enough to be discerned from every other sound. If instead of founding an onset, it sounded a retreat, or sounded one knew not what, who would *prepare for the battle*? To talk in an unknown language in a Christian assembly, is altogether as vain, and to no purpose, as for a trumpet to give no certain sound in the field or day of battle. The army in one case, and the congregation in the other, must be all in suspense, and at a perfect *nonplus*. To speak words that have no signification to those who hear them, is to leave them ignorant of what is spoken. *It is speaking to the air*, *ver. 9.* words without a meaning, can convey no notion or instruction to the mind. And words not understood, have no meaning with those that do not understand them. To talk to them in such language, is to waste our breath. (3.) He compares this speaking in an unknown tongue to the *gibberish of barbarians*. There are, as he says, *ver. 10.* many kinds of voices in the world, none of which are without their proper signification. This is true of the several languages spoken by several nations. All of them have their proper signification. Without this they would be *φωνή ἀσάλον*, a voice and no voice. For that is no language, nor can answer the end of speaking, which has no meaning. But whatever proper signification the words of any language may have in themselves, and those who understand them, they are perfect gibberish to men of another language, that understand them not. In this case, speaker and hearers are *barbarians* to each other, *ver. 11.* They talk and hear only sounds without sense: For this is to be a *barbarian*. For thus saith the polite Ovid, when banished into Pontus, *Barbarus hic ego sum quia non intelligor ulli: I am a barbarian here, none understand me.* To speak in the church in an unknown tongue, is to talk gibberish, it is to play the barbarian; it is to confound the audience instead of instructing them, and for this reason utterly vain and unprofitable.

The apostle having thus established his point, in the two next verses applies it. (1.) By advising them to be chiefly desirous of those gifts that were most for the church's edification, *ver. 12.* Forasmuch as *you are zealous of spiritual gifts*, this way it will become commendable zeal. Be zealous to edify the church, to promote Christian knowledge and practice, and covet those gifts most that will do the best service to mens souls. This is the great rule he gives. Which, (2.) He applies to the matter in hand, that if they did speak a foreign language, they should beg of God the gift of interpreting it, *ver. 13.* That these were different gifts, see *chap. xii. ver. 10.* They might speak and understand a foreign language, who could not readily translate it into their own: and yet was this necessary to the church's edification; for the church must understand, that it might be edified; which yet it could not do, till the foreign language was translated into its own. Let him therefore pray for the gift of interpreting what he speaks in an unknown tongue; or rather, covet and ask of God the gift of interpreting, than of speaking in a language that needs interpretation, this being most for the church's benefit, and therefore among the gifts that excel, *vide ver. 12.* Some understand it, Let him pray so as to interpret what he utters in prayer, in a language unintelligible without it. The sum is, that they should perform all religious exercises in their assemblies, so as that all might join in them, and profit by them. (3.) He enforces this advice with a proper reason, that if *he prayed in an unknown tongue, his spirit might pray*, i. e. a spiritual gift might be exercised in prayer, or his own mind might be devoutly engaged, *but his understanding would be unfruitful*, *ver. 14.* i. e. the sense and meaning of his words would be unfruitful. He would not be understood, nor therefore would others join with him in his devotions. Note, It should be the concern of such as pray in publick, to pray intelligibly; not in a foreign language, nor in a language that if it be not foreign, is above the level of his audience. Language that is most obvious and easy to be understood, is the most proper for publick devotions, and other religious exercises.

15. What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also. 16. Else when thou shalt blest with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned, say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest? 17. For thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified. 18. I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than you all: 19. Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, than by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an *unknown* tongue. 20. My brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit

howbeit, in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men.

The apostle here sums up the argument hitherto, and (1.) Directs them how they should sing and pray in publick, *ver. 15. What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also. I will sing with the spirit, &c.* He does not forbid their praying or singing under a divine afflatus, or when they were inspired for this purpose, or had such a spiritual gift communicated to them: But he would have them perform both, so as to be understood by others, that others might join with them. Note, Publick worship should be performed so as to be understood. (2.) He enforces the argument with several reasons. (1.) That otherwise *the unlearned could not say Amen to their prayers or thanksgiving*, could not join in the worship, for they did not understand it, *ver. 16.* He that fills up, or occupies the place of the learned, i. e. as the antients interpret it, the body of the people, who in most Christian assemblies are illiterate; how should these say *Amen* to prayers in an unknown tongue? i. e. how should they declare their consent and concurrence? This is saying *Amen*, So be it, *God grant the thing we have requested.* Or we join in the confession that hath been made of sin, in the acknowledgment that hath been made of divine mercies and favours. This is the import of saying *amen*. All should say *Amen* inwardly, and it is not improper to testify this inward concurrence in publick prayers and devotions, by an *audible Amen*. The antient Christians said *Amen* aloud. *Vid. Just. Mart. Apol. 2. prope fin.* Now how should the people say *Amen*, to what they did not understand? Note, There can be no concurrence in those prayers that are not understood. The intention of publick devotions is therefore entirely destroyed, if they be performed in an unknown tongue. He that performs may *pray well, and give thanks well*, but not in that time and place; because others are not, cannot be edified, *ver. 17.* by what they understand not.

(2.) He alledges his own example to make the greater impression. Concerning which, observe, (1.) That he did not come behind any of them in this *spiritual gift: I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all*, *ver. 18.* not only more than any single person among you, but more than all together. It was not envy at their better furniture, that made Paul depreciate what they so highly valued, and so much vaunted in. He surpassed them all in this very *gift of tongues*, and did not vilify their gift because he had it not. This spirit of envy is too common in the world. But the apostle took care to guard against this misconception of his purpose, by letting them know, there was more ground for *them* to envy *him* upon this head, than for *him* to envy *them*. Note, When we beat down mens unreasonable value for themselves, or any of their possessions or attainments, we should let them see, if possible, that this doth not proceed from an envious and grudging spirit. We miss our aim if they can fairly give our conduct this invidious turn. Paul could not be justly censured or suspected for any such principle in this whole argument. *He spake more languages than they all.* Yet, (2.) He had rather *speak five words with understanding*, i. e. so as to be understood, and instruct and edify others, *than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue*, *ver. 19.* He was so far from valuing himself upon talking languages, or making ostentation of his talents of this kind, that he had rather speak five intelligible words to benefit others, than make a thousand, ten thousand fine discourses, that would do no one else any good, because they did not understand them. Note, A truly Christian minister will value himself much more upon doing the least spiritual good to mens souls, than upon procuring the greatest applause and commendation to himself. This is true grandeur and nobleness of spirit. It is acting up to his character. It is approving himself the servant of Christ, and not a vassal to his own pride and vanity.

(3.) He adds a plain intimation, that the fondness they discovered for this gift, was but too plain an indication of the immaturity of their judgment. *Brethren, be not children in understanding; in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men*, *ver. 20.* Children are apt to be struck with novelty and strange appearances. They are taken with an outward shew, without enquiring into the true nature and worth of things. Do not you act like them, and prefer noise and shew to worth and substance. Shew a greater ripeness of judgment, and act a more manly part. Be like children in nothing but an innocent and inoffensive disposition. A double rebuke is couched in this passage, both of their pride upon account of their gifts, and their arrogance and haughtiness towards each other, and the contests and quarrels proceeding from them. Note, Christians should be harmless and inoffensive as children, void of all guile and malice; but should have wisdom and knowledge that is ripe and mature. *They should not be unskilful in the word of righteousness*, Heb. v. 13. though they should be unskilful in all the arts of mischief.

21. In the law it is written, *With men of other tongues and other lips, will I speak unto this people: and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord.* 22. Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but

propheying *serveth* not for them that believe not, but for them which believe. 23. If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad? 24. But if all prophesey, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: 25. And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.

In this passage the apostle pursues the argument, and reasons from other topicks, as,

(1.) For that tongues, as the Corinthians used them, were rather a token of judgment from God, than mercy to any people, *ver. 21. In the law, i. e. the Old Testament, it is written with men of other tongues, and other lips, will I speak to this people, and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord, Isa. xxviii. 11.* compare Deut. xxviii. 46, 49. To both these places it is thought the apostle refers. Both are delivered by way of threatening, and one is supposed to interpret the other. The meaning in this view is, that it is an evidence that a people are abandoned of God, when he gives them up to this sort of instruction, to the discipline of those that speak in another language. And sure the apostle's discourse implies, you should not be fond of the tokens of divine displeasure. God can have no gracious regards to those who are left merely to this sort of instruction, and taught in language which they cannot understand. They can never be benefited by such teaching as this. And when they are left to it, it is a sad sign that God gives them over as past cure. And should Christians covet to be in such a state, or bring the churches into it? Yet thus did the Corinthian preachers in effect, who would always deliver their inspirations in an unknown tongue.

(2.) Tongues were rather a sign to unbelievers than to believers, *ver. 22.* It was a spiritual gift, intended for the conviction and conversion of *infidels*, that they might be brought into the Christian church; but converts were to be built up in Christianity by profitable instructions in their own language. The gift of tongues was necessary to spread Christianity and gather churches. It was proper and intended to convince unbelievers of that doctrine which Christians had already embraced; but propheying and interpreting scripture in their own language, was most for the edification of such as did already believe. So that speaking with tongues in Christian assemblies, was altogether out of time and place; neither one nor the other was proper for it. Note, That gifts may be rightly used, it is proper to know the ends which they are intended to serve. To go about the conversion of *infidels*, as the apostles did, without the gift of tongues, and the discovery of this gift, had been a vain undertaking; but in an assembly of Christians already converted to the Christian faith, to make use and ostentation of this gift, would be perfectly impertinent, because it would be of no advantage to the assembly; not for conviction of truth, because they had already embraced it; not for their edification, because they did not understand, and could not get benefit without understanding what they knew.

(3.) The credit and reputation of their assemblies among unbelievers, required them to prefer propheying before speaking with tongues. For, (1.) If when they were all assembled for Christian worship, and their ministers, or all employed in publick worship, should talk unintelligible language, and *infidels* should drop in, they would conclude them to be mad, to be no better than a parcel of wild *fanatics*. Who in their right senses could carry on religious worship in such a manner? Or what sort of religion is that which leaves out sense and understanding? Would not this make Christianity ridiculous to an *heathen*, to hear the ministers of it pray, or preach, or perform any other religious exercise, in a language that neither he, nor the assembly understood. Note, Christian religion is a sober and reasonable thing in itself, and should not, by the ministers of it, be made to look wild or senseless. They disgrace their religion, and vilify their own character, who act any thing that has this aspect. But on the other hand, (2.) If instead of speaking with tongues, those who minister plainly interpret scripture, or preach in language intelligible and proper, the great truths and rules of the gospel; *heathen* or unlearned person coming in, would probably be convinced, and become a convert to Christianity, *ver. 24, 25.* His conscience will be touched, the secrets of his heart will be revealed to him, he will be condemned by the truth he hears, and will be brought to confess his guilt, to pay his homage to God, and own that he is indeed among you, present in the assembly. Note, Scripture truth plainly and duly taught, has a marvellous aptness, to awaken the conscience, and touch the heart. And not this much more for the honour of our religion, than that *infidels* should conclude the ministers of it a set of madmen, at their religious exercises only fits of frenzy? This last would once cast contempt on themselves and their religion too. Instead of procuring applause for themselves, it would render them ridiculous, and involve their profession in the same censure. Where

prophesying would certainly edify the church, much better keep up their credit, and might probably convince and convert *infidels* that might occasionally hear them. Note, Religious exercises in Christian assemblies, should be such as are fit to edify the faithful, and convince, affect, and convert unbelievers. The ministry was not instituted to make ostentation of gifts and parts, but to save souls.

26. How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done to edifying. 27. If any man speak in an *unknown* tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret. 28. But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God. 29. Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge. 30. If *any thing* be revealed to another, that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace. 31. For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted. 32. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. 33. For God is not *the author* of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.

In this passage the apostle reproves them for their disorder, and endeavours to correct and regulate their conduct for the future.

He, (1.) Blames them for the confusion they introduced into the assembly, by ostentation of their gifts, *ver. 26. When ye come together, every one hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, &c. i. e.* Either you are apt to confound the several parts of worship, and whilst one has a psalm to utter by inspiration, another has a doctrine, or revelation. Or else, you are apt to be confused in the same branch of worship, many of you having psalms or doctrines to propose *at the same time*, without staying for one another. Is not this perfect uproar? Can this be edifying? And yet all religious exercises in publick assemblies should have this view. *Let all things be done to edifying.*

(2.) He corrects their faults, and lays down some regulations for their future conduct. As, (1.) To speaking in an *unknown tongue*, he orders, that no more than two or three should do it at one meeting, and this not all together, but successively, one after another. And even this was not to be done unless there were some one to interpret, *ver. 27, 28.* some other interpreter besides himself who spoke; for to speak in an unknown tongue, what himself was afterwards to interpret, could only be for ostentation. But if another were present who could interpret, two miraculous gifts might be exercised at once, and thereby the church edified, and the faith of the hearers confirmed at the same time. But if there were none to interpret, he was to be silent in the church, and only exercise his gift between God and himself, *ver. 28. i. e.* as I think, in private at home, for all who are present at publick worship should join in it, and not be at their private devotions in publick assemblies. Solitary devotions are out of time and place, when the church is met for social worship. (2.) As to prophesying, he orders, (1.) That two or three only should speak at one meeting, *ver. 29.* and this successively, not all at once; and the other should examine and judge what he delivered, *i. e.* discern and determine concerning it, whether it were of divine inspiration or no. There might be *false prophets*, mere pretenders to divine inspiration, and the true prophets were to judge of these, and discern and discover who was divinely inspired, and by such inspiration interpreted scripture, and taught the church, and who was not: what was of divine inspiration, and what was not. This seems to be the meaning of this rule, for where a prophet was known to be such, and under the divine afflatus, he could not be judged; for this were to subject even the holy Spirit to the judgment of men. He who was indeed inspired, and known to be so, was above all human judgment. (2.) He orders that if any assistant prophet had a revelation, whilst another was prophesying, that other should *hold his peace*, be silent, *ver. 30. viz.* before the inspired assistant uttered his revelation. Indeed, it is by many understood, that the former speaker should immediately hold his peace. But this seems unnatural, and not so well to agree with the context. For why must one that was speaking by inspiration, be immediately silent upon another man's being inspired, and suppress what was dictated to him by the same Spirit? Indeed he who had the new revelation might claim liberty of speech in his turn, upon producing his vouchers. But why must liberty of speech be taken from him who was speaking before, and his mouth stopped, when he was delivering the dictates of the same Spirit, and could produce the same vouchers? Would the Spirit of God move one to speak, and before he had delivered what he had to say, move another to interrupt him, and put him to silence? This seems to me an unnatural thought. Nor is it more agreeable to the context, and the reason annexed, *ver. 31. That all might prophesy one by one, or one after another, which could not be where any one was in-*

terrupted and silenced before he had done prophesying; but might easily be, if he, who was afterward inspired, forbore to deliver his new revelation, till the former prophet had finished what he had to say. And to confirm this sense, the apostle quickly adds, *The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets, ver. 32. i. e.* The spiritual gifts they have, leave them still possessed of their reason, and capable of using their own judgment in the exercise of them. Divine inspirations are not like the diabolical possessions of heathen priests, violent and ungovernable, and prompting them to act as if they were beside themselves: but are sober and calm, and capable of regular conduct. The man inspired by the Spirit of God, may still act the man, and observe the rules of natural order and decency in delivering his revelations. His spiritual gift is thus far subject to his pleasure, and to be managed by his discretion.

(3.) The apostle gives the reasons of these regulations. As, (1.) That they would be for the church's benefit, their instruction and consolation. It is that *all may learn, and all may be comforted, or exhorted*, that the prophets were to speak in that orderly manner the apostle advises. Note, The instruction, edification, and comfort of the church, is that for which God instituted the ministry. And sure ministers should, as much as possible, fit their ministrations to these purposes. (2.) He tells them, *God is not the God of confusion, but of peace and good order, ver. 33.* And therefore divine inspirations should by no means throw Christian assemblies into confusion, and break through all rules of common decency; which yet would be unavoidable, if several inspired men should all at once utter what was suggested to them by the Spirit of God, and not wait to take their turns. Note, The honour of God requires that things should be managed in Christian assemblies, so as not to transgress the rules of natural decency. If they are managed in a tumultuous and confused manner, what a notion must this give of the God who is worshipped, to considerate observers? Doth it look as if he were the God of peace and order, and an enemy to confusion? Things should be managed so in divine worship, as that no unlovely or dishonourable notion of God should be formed in the minds of observers. (3.) He adds, that things were thus orderly managed in all the other churches; *as in all the churches of the saints, ver. 33.* They kept to these rules in the exercise of their spiritual gifts, which was a manifest proof that the church of Corinth might observe the same regulations. And it would be perfectly scandalous for them who exceeded most churches in spiritual gifts, to be more disorderly than any in the exercise of them. Note, Though other churches are not to be our rule, yet the regard they pay to the rules of natural decency and order, should restrain us from breaking these rules. Thus far they may be proposed as examples, and it is a shame not to follow them.

34. Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but *they are commanded* to be under obedience, as also saith the law. 35. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.

Here the apostle, (1.) Enjoins silence to their women in publick assemblies, and to such a degree, that they must not ask questions for their own information in the church, but *ask their husbands at home. They are to learn in silence with all subjection: but*, saith the apostle, *I suffer them not to teach, 1 Tim. ii. 11, 12.* There is indeed an intimation, *chap. xi. ver. 5.* as if the women sometimes did pray and prophesy in their assemblies, which the apostle in that passage doth not simply condemn, but the manner of performance, *viz.* praying or prophesying with the *head uncovered*, which in that age and country was throwing off the distinction of sexes, and setting themselves on a level with the men. But here he seems to forbid all publick performances of theirs. *They are not permitted to speak, ver. 34. viz.* in the church, neither in praying, nor prophesying. The connexion seems plainly to include the last, in the limited sense in which it is taken in this chapter, *viz.* for preaching or interpreting scripture by inspiration. And indeed, for a woman to prophesy in this sense, were to teach, which doth not so well besit her state of subjection. A teacher of others has in that respect a superiority over them, which is not allowed the woman over the man, nor must she therefore be allowed to teach in a congregation. *I suffer them not to teach.* But praying and uttering hymns inspired, was not teaching. And seeing there were women who had spiritual gifts of this sort in that age of the church, see *Acts xii. 9.* and might be under this impulse in the assembly, must they altogether suppress it? Or why should they have this gift, if it must never be publicly exercised? For these reasons, some think these general prohibitions are only to be understood in common cases, but that upon extraordinary occasions, when women were under a divine *afflatus*, and known to be so, they might have liberty of speech. They were not ordinarily to teach, nor so much as to debate and ask questions in the church, *but learn in silence there; and if difficulties occurred, ask their own husbands at home.* Note, That as it is the woman's duty to learn in subjection,

subjection, it is the man's duty keep up his superiority, by being able to instruct her. If it be her duty to ask her husband at home, it is his concern and duty to endeavour at least to be able to answer her enquiries. If it be a shame for her to speak in the church where she should be silent, it is a shame for him to be silent when he should speak, and not be able to give an answer, when she asks him at home.

(2.) We have here the reason of this injunction, *viz.* It is God's law and commandment that they should be under obedience, *ver.* 34. They are placed in subordination to the man, and it is a shame for them to do any thing that looks like an affectation of changing ranks, which speaking in publick seemed to imply, at least in that age, and among that people, as would publick teaching much more. So that the apostle concludes it was a shame for women to speak in the church, in the assembly. Shame is the mind's uneasy reflexion on having done an indecent thing. And what more indecent, than for a woman to quit her rank, renounce the subordination of her sex, or do what in common account had such aspect and appearance? Note, Our spirit and conduct should be suitable to our rank. The natural distinctions God has made, we should observe. Those he has placed in subjection to others, should not set themselves on a level, or affect, or assume, superiority. The woman was made subject to the man, and she should keep her station, and be content with it. For this reason they must be silent in the churches, not set up for teachers. For this is setting up for superiority over the men.

36. What? came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only? 37. If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you, are the commandments of the Lord. 38. But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant. 39. Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues. 40. Let all things be done decently, and in order.

In these verses the apostle closes his argument, (1.) With a just rebuke of the Corinthians for their extravagant pride and self-conceit. They so managed with their spiritual gifts, as no church did like them. They behaved in a manner by themselves, and would not easily endure controul or regulation. Now, saith the apostle, to beat down this arrogant humour, *came the gospel out from you? or came it to you only?* *ver.* 36. Did Christianity come out of Corinth? Was its original among you? Or if not, is it now limited and confined to you? Are you the only church favoured with divine revelations, that you will depart from the decent usages of all other churches? And to make ostentation of your spiritual gifts, bring confusion into Christian assemblies? How intolerable assuming is this behaviour? Pray bethink yourselves. When it was needful or proper, the apostle *could rebuke with all authority.* And sure his rebukes, if ever, were proper here. Note, They must be reprov'd and humbled, whose spiritual pride and self-conceit throw Christian churches and assemblies into confusion. Though such men will hardly bear even the rebukes of an apostle.

(2.) He lets them know, that what he said to them was the command of God, nor durst any true prophet, any one really inspired, deny it, *ver.* 37. *If any man think himself a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge, &c.* Nay, let him be tried by this very rule. If he will not own, what I deliver on this head, to be the will of Christ, he himself never had the Spirit of Christ. The Spirit of Christ can never contradict itself. If it speak in me, and in them, it must speak the same things in both. If their revelations contradict mine, they do not come from the same Spirit. Either I or they must be false prophets. *By this therefore you may know them.* If they say my directions in this matter are no divine commandments, you may depend upon it, they are not divinely inspired. But if any continue after all, through prejudice or obstinacy, uncertain or ignorant, whether they or I speak by the Spirit of God, they must be left under the power of this ignorance. If their pretences to inspiration can stand in competition with the apostolical character and powers which I have, I have lost all my authority and influence; and the persons that allow of this competition against me, are out of the reach of conviction, and must be left to themselves. Note, It is just with God to leave them to the blindness of their own minds, who wilfully shut out the light. They who would be ignorant in so plain a case, were justly left under the power of their mistake.

(3.) He sums up all in two general advices. (1.) That though they should not despise the gift of tongues, nor altogether disuse it under the mentioned regulations, yet they should prefer prophesying. This is indeed the scope of the whole argument. It was to be preferred to the other, because it was the more useful gift. (2.) He charges them to *let all things be done decently and in order*, *ver.* 40. *i. e.* that they should avoid every thing that was manifestly indecent and disorderly. Not that they should

hence take occasion to bring into the Christian church and worship any thing that a vain mind might think ornamental to it, and would help to set it off. Such indecencies and disorders, as he had remarked upon, were especially to be shunned. They must do nothing that was manifestly *childish*, *ver.* 20. or what would give occasion to say they *were mad*, *ver.* 22. nor so as to breed *confusion*, *ver.* 33. This would be utterly indecent. It would make a tumult and mob of a Christian assembly. But they were to do things in order. They were to speak one after another, and not all at once; take their turns, and not interrupt one another. To do otherwise, was to destroy the end of a Christian ministry, and all assemblies for Christian worship. Note, Manifest indecencies and disorders are to be carefully kept out of all Christian churches, and every part of divine worship. They should have nothing in them that is childish, absurd, ridiculous, wild or tumultuous; but all parts of divine worship should be carried on in a manly, grave, rational, composed, and orderly manner. God is not to be dishonoured, nor his worship disgraced, by our unbecoming and disorderly performance of it, and attendance at it.

C H A P. XV.

In this chapter the apostle treats of that great article of Christianity, the resurrection of the dead. (1.) He establishes the certainty of our Saviour's resurrection, ver. 1—12. (2.) He from this truth, sets himself to refute those, who said there is no resurrection of the dead, ver. 12—20. (3.) From our Saviour's resurrection he establishes the resurrection of the dead, and confirms the Corinthians in the belief of it, by some other considerations, ver. 20—35. (4.) He answers an objection against this truth, and takes occasion thence to shew, what a vast change will be made in the bodies of believers at the resurrection, ver. 35—51. (5.) He informs us what a change will be made in them, that shall be living at the sound of the last trumpet, and the complete conquest the just shall then obtain over death and the grave, ver. 51—58. And (6.) Sums up the argument with a very serious exhortation to Christians, to be resolved and diligent in their Lord's service, because they know they shall be so gloriously rewarded by him, ver. 58.

1. **M**OREOVER, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also you have received, and wherein ye stand; 2. By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. 3. For I delivered unto you first of all, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures: 4. And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: 5. And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve. 6. After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once: of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. 7. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. 8. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. 9. For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 10. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me, was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. 11. Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed.

It is the apostle's business in this chapter to assert and establish the doctrine of the *resurrection of the dead*, which some of the Corinthians flatly denied, *ver.* 10. Whether they turned this doctrine into allegory, as did Hymeneus and Philetus, by saying it was already past, *2 Tim.* ii. 17, 18. and several of the ancient hereticks, by making it mean no more than a changing their course of life: Or whether they rejected it as absurd, upon principles of reason and science: It seems they denied it in the proper sense. And they disowned a future state of recompences, by denying the resurrection of the dead. Now that heathens and infidels should deny this truth, doth not seem so strange. But that Christians, who had their religion by revelation, should deny a truth so plainly discovered, is surprising, especially when it is a truth of such importance. It was time for the apostle to confirm them in this truth, when the staggering of their faith in this point was likely to shake their Christianity, and they were yet in great danger of having their faith staggered.

He begins with an epitome or summary of the gospel, what he had preached amongst them, namely, the death and resurrection of Christ. Upon this foundation the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead is built. Note, Divine truths appear with greatest evidence, when they are looked upon in their mutual connexion. The foundation must be strengthened, that the superstructure may be secured. Now concerning this gospel,

Observe, (1.) What a stress he lays on it, *ver. 1, 2. Moreover brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached to you.* (1.) It was what he constantly preached. His word was *not yea and nay*. He always preached the same gospel, and taught the same truth. He could appeal to his hearers for this. Truth is in its own nature invariable, and the infallible teachers of divine truth could never be at variance with themselves, or one another. The doctrine which Paul had heretofore taught, he still taught. (2.) It was what *they had received*, had been convinced of the faith, believed it in their hearts, or at least made profession of doing so with their mouths. It was no strange doctrine. It was that very gospel in which, or *by which*, they had hitherto stood, and must continue to stand. If they gave up this truth, they left themselves no ground to stand upon, no footing in religion. Note, The doctrine of Christ's death and resurrection, is at the foundation of Christianity. Remove this foundation, and the whole fabrick falls. All our hopes for eternity sink at once. And it is by holding this truth firm, that Christians are made to stand in a day of trial, and kept faithful to God. (3.) It was that alone by which they could hope for salvation, *ver. 2. for there is no salvation in any other name; no name given under heaven by which we may be saved, but the name of Christ.* And there is no salvation in his name, but upon supposition of his death and resurrection. These are the saving truths of our holy religion. The death and revival, the crucifixion of our Redeemer, and his conquest over death, are the very source of our spiritual life and hopes. Now concerning these saving truths, observe, (1.) That they must be retained in mind, they must be held fast, so the word is translated, *Heb. x. 23. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith.* Note, The saving truths of the gospel must be fixed on our mind, revolved much in our thoughts, and maintained and held fast to the end, if we would be saved. They will not save us, if we do not attend to them, and yield to their power, and continue to do so to the end. *He only that endureth to the end shall be saved, Matth. x. 22.* (2.) That *we believe in vain*, unless we continue and persevere in the faith of the gospel. We shall be never the better for a temporary faith. Nay, we shall aggravate our guilt by relapsing into infidelity. And in vain is it to profess Christianity, or our faith in Christ, if we deny the resurrection; for this must imply and involve the denial of his resurrection: And take away this, you make nothing of Christianity, you leave nothing for faith or hope to fix upon.

(2.) Observe, What this gospel is, on which the apostle lays such stress. It was that doctrine which he had received, and delivered to them, *ἐν πρώτοις*, among the first, *the principal*. It was a doctrine of the first rank, a most necessary truth, *viz.* How that Christ *died for our sins, and was buried, and rose again*. Or in other words, that *he was delivered for our offences, and rose again for our justification*, *Rom. iv. 25.* that he was offered in sacrifice for our sins, and rose again, to shew that he had procured forgiveness for them, and was accepted of God in this offering. Note, Christ's death and resurrection are the very sum and substance of evangelical truth. Hence we derive our spiritual life now, and here we must found our hopes of everlasting life hereafter.

(3.) Observe, How this truth is confirmed. (1.) By Old Testament predictions. He died for our sins according to the scriptures. He was buried, and rose from the dead according to the scriptures. According to scripture-prophecies, and scripture-types. Such prophecies as *Psal. xvi. 10. Isa. liii. 4, 5, 6, &c. Dan. ix. 26, 27. Hos. vi. 2.* Such scripture-types as *Jonah, Matth. xii. 40.* as Isaac, who is expressly said by the apostle to have been received *from the dead in a figure*, *Heb. xi. 19.* Note, It is a great confirmation of our faith of the gospel, to see how it corresponds with antient types and prophecies. (2.) By the testimony of many eye-witnesses, who saw Christ after he was risen from the dead. He reckons up five several appearances, besides that to himself. *He was seen of Cephas, or Peter, then of the twelve*, called so, though Judas was no longer among them, because this was their usual number: then he was *seen of above five hundred brethren at once*, many of which were living when the apostle wrote this epistle, though some were fallen asleep. This was in Galilee, *Matth. xxviii. 10.* After that he was seen of James singly, and then by all the apostles, when he was taken up into heaven. This was on mount Olives, *Luke. xxiv. 50.* compare *Acts i. 2, 5, 6, 7.* Note, How uncontrollably evident was Christ's resurrection from the dead, when so many eyes saw him at so many several times alive, and when he indulged the weakness of one disciple so far, as to let him handle him, to put his resurrection out of doubt? And what reason have we to believe them, who were so steady in maintaining this truth, though they hazarded all that was dear to them in this world, by endeavouring to assert and propagate it! Even Paul himself was last of all favoured with the sight of him. It was

one of the peculiar offices of an apostle, to be a witness of our Saviour's resurrection, *Luke xxiv. 48.* And when Paul was called to the apostolical office, he was made an evidence of this sort. *The Lord Jesus appeared to him by the way to Damascus, Acts ix. 17.*

And having mentioned this favour, he takes occasion from it, to make an humble digression concerning himself. He was highly favoured of God, but he always endeavoured to keep up a mean opinion of himself, and to express it. So he does hereby, observing, (1.) That he was *one born out of due time*, *ver. 8.* an abortive, *ἔκτρωμα*, a child dead-born, and out of time. Paul resembled such a birth, in the suddenness of his new birth, in that he was not matured for the apostolical function, as the others were, who had personal converse with our Lord. He was called to the office when such conversation was not to be had, *out of time for it*. He had not known nor followed the Lord, nor been formed in his family, as the others were, for this high and honourable function. This was in Paul's account a very humbling circumstance. (2.) By owning himself *inferior to the other apostles; not meet to be called an apostle*. The least, because the last of them, called latest to the office, and not worthy to be called an apostle, neither to have the office nor title, because he had been *a persecutor of the church of God*, *ver. 9.* Indeed, he tells us elsewhere, that he was *not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles*, *2 Cor. xi. 5.* For gifts, graces, services and sufferings, inferior to none of them. Yet some circumstances in his case, made him think more meanly of himself, than of any of them. Note, An humble spirit, in the midst of high attainments, is a great ornament to any man. It sets his good qualities off to much greater advantage. What kept Paul low in an especial manner, was the remembrance of his former wickedness, his raging and destructive zeal against Christ and his members. Note, How easily God can bring good out of the greatest evil? When sinners are by divine grace turned into saints, he makes the remembrance of their former sins very serviceable, to make them humble, and diligent, and faithful. (3.) By ascribing all that was valuable in him to divine grace. *But by the grace of God I am that I am*, *ver. 10.* It is God's prerogative to say, *I am that I am*. It is our privilege to be able to say, *by God's grace we are what we are*. We are nothing but what God makes us. Nothing in religion, but what his grace makes us. All that is good in us, is a stream from this fountain. Paul was sensible of this, and kept humble and thankful by this conviction. So should we. Nay, though he was conscious of his own diligence, and zeal, and service, so that he could say of himself, *the grace of God was not given him in vain, but he laboured more abundantly than they all*; he thought himself so much more the debtor to divine grace. *Yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me*. Note, Those that have the grace of God bestowed on them, should take care that it be not in vain. They should cherish and exercise, and exert this heavenly principle. So did Paul, and therefore laboured with so much heart, and so much success. And yet the more he laboured, and the more good he did, the more humble was he in his opinion of himself, and the more disposed to own and magnify the favour of God towards him, his free and unmerited favour. Note, An humble spirit will be very apt to own and magnify the grace of God. An humble spirit is commonly a gracious one. Where pride is subdued, there it is reasonable to believe grace reigns.

After this digression, the apostle returns to his argument, and tells them, *ver. 11.* that he not only preached the same gospel himself at all times, and in all places, but that all the apostles preached the same. *Whether it were they or I, so we preached, and so ye believed.* Whether Peter or Paul, or any other apostle, had converted them to Christianity, all maintained the same truth, told the same story, preached the same doctrine, and confirmed it by the same evidence. All agreed in this, that Jesus Christ, and he crucified, and slain, and then rising from the dead, was the very sum and substance of Christianity. And this all true Christians believe. All the apostles agreed in this testimony, all Christians agree in the belief of it. By this faith they live, in this faith they die.

12. Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you, that there is no resurrection of the dead? 13. But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen. 14. And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. 15. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God, that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. 16. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: 17. And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. 18. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ, are perished. 19. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

Having confirmed the truth of our Saviour's resurrection, the apostle goes on to refute those among the Corinthians, that said there would be none. *If Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?* ver. 12. It seems from this passage, and the course of the argument, there were some among the Corinthians, that thought the resurrection an impossibility. This was a common sentiment among the heathens. But against this the apostle produces incontestable matter of fact, viz. *The resurrection of Christ*. And goes on to argue against them from the absurdities that must follow from their principle. As,

(1.) *If there be, can be, no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen*, ver. 13. and again, *if the dead rise not*, cannot be raised, or recovered to life, *then is not Christ raised*, ver. 16. And yet it was foretold by ancient prophecies, that he should rise, and it has been proved by multitudes of eye-witnesses that he is risen. And will you say, will any among you dare to say, that is not, cannot be, which God long ago said shall be, and is now undoubted matter of fact?

(2.) It would follow hereupon, that the preaching and faith of the gospel would be vain. *If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith vain*, ver. 14. This supposition admitted would destroy the principal evidence of Christianity, and so, (1.) Make preaching vain. *We apostles should be found false witnesses of God*. We pretend to be God's witnesses for this truth, and to work miracles by his power in confirmation of it, and are all the while deceivers, lyars for God, if in his name, and by power received from him, we go forth and publish, and assert a thing false in fact, and impossible to be true. And doth not this make us the vainest fellows in the world, and our office and ministry the vainest and most useless thing in the world? What end could we propose to ourselves in undertaking this hard and hazardous service, if we knew our religion stood on no better a foot, nay if we were not well assured of the contrary? What should we preach for? Would not our labour be wholly in vain? We can have no very favourable expectations in this life, and we could have none beyond it. If Christ be not risen, the gospel is a jest. It is chaff and emptiness. (2.) This supposition would make the faith of Christians vain, as well as the labours of ministers. *If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins*, ver. 16. Yet under the guilt, and condemnation of sin, because it is through his death and sacrifice for sin alone, that forgiveness is to be had. *We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins*, Eph. i. 7. No remission of sins is to be had, but through the shedding of his blood. And had his blood been shed, and his life taken away without ever being restored, what evidence could we have had, that through him we should have justification and eternal life? Had he remained under the power of death, how should he have delivered us from its power? And how vain a thing is faith in him, upon this supposition? He must rise for our justification, who was delivered for our sins, or in vain we look for any such benefit by him. There had been no justification nor salvation, if Christ had not risen. And must not faith in Christ be vain, and of no signification, if he be still among the dead?

(3.) Another absurdity following from this supposition is, that *those who are fallen asleep in Christ, are perished*. If there be no resurrection, they cannot rise, and therefore are lost, even those who have died in the Christian faith, and for it. It is plain from this, that those among the Corinthians, who denied the resurrection, meant thereby a state of future retribution, and not merely the revival of the flesh. They took death to be the destruction and extinction of the man, and not merely of the bodily life. For otherwise the apostle could not infer the utter loss of those that slept in Jesus, from the supposition they would never rise more, or that they *had no hopes in Christ after life*, ver. 20. For they might have hope of happiness for their minds, if these survived their bodies. And this would prevent the limiting their hopes in Christ to this life only. Upon supposition there is no resurrection in your sense, no after-state and life, then dead Christians are quite lost. How vain a thing were our faith and religion upon this supposition? And this,

(1.) Would infer, that Christ's ministers and servants were of *all men most miserable*, as having *hope in him in this life only*, ver. 19. which is another absurdity, that would follow from the asserting no resurrection. Their condition, who hope in Christ, would be worse than that of other men. *Who hope in Christ*. Note, All that believe in Christ have hope in him. All who believe in him as Redeemer, hope for redemption and salvation by him. But if there be no resurrection, nor state of future recompence, (which was intended by those who denied the resurrection at Corinth) their hope in him must be limited to this life. And if all their hopes in Christ lie within the compass of this life, they are in much worse condition than the rest of mankind, especially at that time, and under those circumstances, in which the apostle wrote. For then they had no countenance nor protection from the rulers of the world, but were hated and persecuted by all men. Preachers and private Christians therefore had an hard lot, if in this life only they had hope in Christ. Better be any thing than a Christian upon these terms. For in this world they are hated, and hunted, and abused, stripped of all

worldly comforts, and exposed to all manner of sufferings. They fare much harder than other men in this life, and yet have no farther nor better hopes. And is it not absurd for one who believes in Christ, to admit a principle that involves so absurd an inference? Can that man have faith in Christ, who can believe concerning him, that he will leave his faithful servants, whether ministers or others, in a worse state than his enemies? Note, It is a gross absurdity in a Christian, to admit the supposition of no resurrection or future state. It leaves him no hopes beyond this world, and this many times would make his condition the worst in the world. Indeed, the Christian is by his religion crucified to this world, and taught to live upon the hope of another. Carnal pleasures are insipid to him in a great degree, and spiritual and heavenly pleasures are those which he affects and pants after. How sad is his case indeed, if he must be dead to worldly pleasures, and yet never hope for any better?

20. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept. 21. For since by man *came* death, by man *came* also the resurrection of the dead. 22. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. 23. But every man in his own order: Christ the first-fruits, afterward they that are Christs, at his coming. 24. Then *cometh* the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority, and power. 25. For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. 26. The last enemy *that* shall be destroyed, is death. 27. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under *him*, it is manifest that he is excepted which did put all things under him. 28. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all. 29. Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead? 30. And why stand we in jeopardy every hour? 31. I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. 32. If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink, for to morrow we die. 33. Be not deceived: Evil communications corrupt good manners. 34. Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for so some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame.

In this passage the apostle establishes the truth of the *resurrection of the dead*, the holy dead, *the dead in Christ*, on the resurrection of Christ. (1.) Because he is indeed *the first-fruits of them that slept*, ver. 20. He is truly risen himself, and he is risen in this very quality and character, as the *first-fruits* of them that sleep in him. As he is assuredly risen, so in his resurrection there is as much an earnest given, that the *dead in him* shall rise, as there was that the Jewish harvest in general should be accepted, and blessed by the offering and acceptance of the *first-fruits*. The whole lump was made holy by the consecration of the *first fruits*, Rom. xi. 16. And the whole body of Christ, all that are by faith united to him, are by his resurrection ascertained of their own. As he is risen they shall rise; just as the lump is holy, because the first-fruits are so. He is not risen merely for himself, but *as head of the body the church*; and *those that sleep in him, God will bring with him*, 1 Thess. iv. 14. Note, Christ's resurrection is a pledge and earnest of ours, if we are true believers in him. Because he is risen, we shall rise. We are a part of the consecrated lump, and shall partake of the acceptance and favour vouchsafed the *first-fruits*. This is the first argument used by the apostle in confirmation of the truth, and it is, (2.) Illustrated by a parallel between the first and second Adam. For since by man *came* death, it was every way proper that by man should come deliverance from it, or which is all one, a resurrection, ver. 21. And so, *as in Adam all die, in Christ shall all be made alive*. As through the sin of the first Adam, all men became mortal, because all men derived from him the same sinful nature, so through the merit and resurrection of Christ shall all that are made to partake of the Spirit, and the spiritual nature, revive and become immortal. All that die, die through the sin of Adam. All that *are raised*, in the sense of the apostle, rise through the merit and power of Christ. But the meaning is not, that as all men died in Adam, so all men without exception, shall be made all alive in Christ. For the scope of the apostle's argument restrains the general meaning. Christ rose as the first-fruits, therefore *they that are Christ's*, ver. 23, shall rise too. From hence it will not follow, that all men without exception shall rise too; but it will fitly follow, that all who thus rise, rise in virtue of Christ's resurrection, and so that their revival is owing to the man Christ Jesus, as the mortality

mortality of all mankind was owing to the first man. And so as by man came death, by man came deliverance. Thus it seemed fit to the divine wisdom, that as the first Adam ruined his posterity by sin, the second Adam should raise his seed to a glorious immortality. Before he leaves the argument, he (3.) Observes, That, there will be an order observed in their resurrection. What that precisely will be, we are no where told, but in the general only here, that there will be order observed. Possibly they may rise first who have held the highest rank, and done the most eminent service, or suffered the most grievous evils, or cruel deaths, for Christ's sake. It is only here said, that the *first-fruits* are supposed to rise first, and afterward all that are Christ's, when he shall come again. Not that Christ's resurrection must in fact go before the resurrection of any of his, but it must be laid as the foundation. As it was not necessary that they who lived remote from Jerusalem, must go thither and offer the first-fruits before they could account the lump holy, but yet they must be set apart for this purpose, till they could be offered, which might be done at any time from Pentecost till the feast of dedication. See bishop Patrick on *Numb.* xxvi. 2. The offering of the first-fruits was what made the lump holy, and the lump was made holy by this offering, though it was not made before the harvest was gathered in, so it were set apart for that end, and duly offered afterwards. So Christ's resurrection must in order of *nature* precede that of his saints, though some of these might rise in order of *time* before him. It is because he is risen that they rise. Note, They that are Christ's must rise, because of their relation to him.

(2.) He argues from the continuance of the mediatorial kingdom till all Christ's enemies are destroyed, the last of which is death, *ver.* 24, 25, 26. He is risen, and upon his resurrection was invested with sovereign empire, *had all power in heaven and earth put into his hands*, *Matth.* xxviii. 18. *Had a name given him above every name, that every knee might bow to him, and every tongue confess him Lord*, *Phil.* ii. 9, 10, 11. And the administration of this kingdom must continue in his hands, *Till all opposing power, and rule, and authority be put down*, *ver.* 24. *till all enemies are put under his feet*, *ver.* 25. and *till the last enemy is destroyed*, which is death, *ver.* 26. Now, this argument implies in it all these particulars. (1.) That our Saviour rose from the dead to have all power put into his hands, and have and administer a kingdom as mediator. *For this end he both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead, and living*, *Rom.* xiv. 9. (2.) That this mediatorial kingdom is to have an end, at least as far as it is concerned in bringing his people safe to glory, and subduing all his and their enemies. *Then cometh the end*, *ver.* 24. (3.) That it is not to have an end till all opposing power be put down, and all enemies brought to his feet, *ver.* 24, 25. (4.) That among other enemies death must be destroyed, *ver.* 26. or abolished. Its power over his members must be disannulled. Thus far the apostle is express, but he leaves us to make the inference, that therefore the saints must rise; else death and the grave would have power over them, nor would our Saviour's kingly power prevail against the last enemy of his people, and annul its power. When saints shall live again, and die no more, then, and not till then, is death abolished, which must be brought about, before our Saviour's mediatorial kingdom is delivered up, which yet must be in due time. The saints therefore shall live again, and die no more.

This is the scope of the argument, but the apostle drops several hints in the course of it, that will be properly noticed. As, (1.) That our Saviour as man, and mediator between God and man, has a delegated royalty, a kingdom given. *All things are put under him, he excepted that did put all things under him*, *ver.* 27. As man, all his authority must be delegated. And though his mediation supposes his divine nature, yet as Mediator he does not so explicitly sustain the character of God, but a middle person between God and man, partaking of both natures, human and divine, as he was to reconcile both parties, God and man; and receiving commission and authority from God the Father to act in this office. The Father appears, in this whole dispensation, in the majesty, and with the authority of God: The Son made man, appears as the minister of the Father, though he is God as well as the Father. Nor is this passage to be understood of the eternal dominion over all his creatures, which belongs to him as God, but of a kingdom committed to him as Mediator and God-man, and that chiefly after his resurrection, when having overcome he sat down with his Father on his throne, *Rev.* iii. 21. Then was the prediction verified, *I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion*, *Psal.* ii. 6. placed him on his throne. This is meant by the phrase, so frequent in the writings of the New Testament, of *sitting at the right hand of God*, *Mark* xvi. 19. *Rom.* viii. 34. *Col.* iii. 1, &c. *On the right hand of power*, *Mark* xiv. 62. *Luke* xx. 69. *On the right hand of the Majesty on high*, *Heb.* i. 3. *On the right hand of the throne of God*, *Heb.* xii. 2. *On the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens*, *Heb.* viii. 1. Sitting down in this seat, is taking upon him the exercise of this mediatorial power and royalty, which was done upon his ascension into heaven, *Mark* xvi. 19. And it is spoken of in scripture, as a recompence made him for his deep humiliation and self-abasement, in

becoming man, and dying for man the accursed death of the cross, *Phil.* ii. 6—12. Upon his ascension, he was made *head over all things to the church*, had power given him to govern and protect it against all its enemies, and in the end destroy them, and complete the salvation of all that believe in him. This is not a power appertaining to Godhead as such. It is not original and unlimited power, but power given and limited to special purposes. And though he who has it is God, yet (inasmuch as he is somewhat else besides God, and in this whole dispensation acts not as *God*, but as *Mediator*, not as the *offended Majesty*, but as one interposing in favour of his offending creatures, and this by virtue of his consent and commission, who acts and appears always in that character) he may properly be said to have this power given him. He may reign as God with power unlimited, and yet may reign as Mediator with a power delegated, and limited to these particular purposes. (2.) That this delegated royalty must sometimes be delivered up to the Father from whom it was received, *ver.* 24. For it is a power received for particular ends and purposes. A power to govern and protect his church till all the members of it are gathered in, and the enemies of it for ever subdued and destroyed, *ver.* 25, 26. And when these ends shall be obtained, there is no need that the power and authority should be continued. The Redeemer must reign till his enemies are destroyed, and the salvation of his church and people is accomplished; and when this end is attained, then will he deliver up the power which he had only for this purpose. Though he may continue to reign over his glorified church and body in heaven, and in this sense it may notwithstanding be said, that *he shall reign for ever and ever*, *Rev.* xi. 15. *That he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end*, *Luke* i. 33. *That his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away*, *Dan.* vii. 14. See also *Micah* iv. 7. (3.) The Redeemer shall certainly reign till the very last enemy of his people is destroyed, till death itself be abolished, till his saints revive, and recover perfect life, never to be in fear or danger of dying any more. He shall have all power in heaven and earth till then; *He who loved us, and gave himself for us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood*; he who is so nearly related to us, and so much concerned for us. What support should this be to his saints in every hour of distress and temptation? *He is alive who was dead, and liveth for ever*, and doth reign and will continue to reign till the redemption of his people be completed, and the utter ruin of their enemies effected. (4.) When this is done, and all things are put under his feet, then shall the Son become subject to him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all, *ver.* 28. The meaning of which I take to be, that then the man Christ Jesus, who has appeared in so much majesty during the whole administration of this kingdom, shall appear upon the giving it up, to be a subject of the Father. Things are in scripture many times said, then to be, when they are manifested and made to appear. And this delivering up the kingdom will make it manifest, that he who appeared in the majesty of the sovereign King, was during this administration a subject of God. The glorified humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ, with all the dignity and power conferred on it, was no more than a glorious creature. This will appear when the kingdom shall be delivered up. And it will appear to the divine glory, that *God may be all in all*, i. e. that the accomplishment of our salvation may appear all over divine, and God alone may have the honour of it. Note, Though the human nature must be employed in the work of our redemption; yet *God was all in all in it*. *It was the Lord's doing, and should be marvellous in our eyes*.

(3.) He argues for the resurrection, from the case of those that were baptized for the dead, *ver.* 29. *What shall they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they baptized for the dead? What shall they do, if the dead rise not? What have they done? How vain a thing hath their baptism been? Must they stand by it, or renounce it? Why are they baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not?* ὑπὲρ τῶν νεκρῶν. But what is this baptism for the dead? It is necessary to be known, that the apostle's argument may be understood; whether it be only *argumentum ad hominem*, or *ad rem*; whether it concludes for the thing in dispute universally, or only against the particular persons who were baptized for the dead. But who shall interpret this very obscure passage, which though it consists of no more than *three words*, besides the articles, has had more than *three times three* senses put on it by interpreters? It being not agreed, what is meant by *baptism*; whether it be to be taken in a proper or figurative sense; and if in a proper sense, whether it be to be understood of Christian baptism properly so called, or other ablution. And as little is it agreed who are the dead, or in what sense the preposition ὑπὲρ is to be taken. Some understand the dead of our Saviour himself, *vide* Whitby in *Loc.* Why are persons baptized in the name of a dead Saviour, a Saviour who remains among the dead, if the dead rise not? But it is I believe an instance perfectly singular, for οἱ νεκροὶ to mean no more than one dead person. It is a signification the words have no where else. And the οἱ βαπτίζομενοι (the baptized) seem plainly to mean some particular persons, not Christians in general; which yet must be the signification, if the οἱ νεκροὶ (the dead) be understood of our Saviour. Some understand the passage of the mar-

tyrs; why do they suffer martyrdom for their religion? This is sometimes called the baptism of blood by the ancients, and by our Saviour himself baptism indefinitely, *Matth. xx. 22. Luke xii. 50.* But in what sense can they that die martyrs for their religion be said to be baptized, *that is*, die martyrs for the dead? Some understand it of a custom that was observed, as some of the ancients tell us, among many that professed the Christian name in the first ages, of baptizing some in the name and stead of *catechumens* dying without baptism. But this favoured of such superstition, that if the custom had prevailed in the church so soon, the apostle would hardly have mentioned it without signifying a dislike of it. Some understand it of baptizing over the dead, which was a custom, they tell us, that early obtained: and this to testify their hope of the resurrection. This sense is pertinent to the apostle's argument, but it appears not that any such practice was in use in the apostle's time. Others understand it of those who have been baptized for the sake, or on occasion, of the martyrs, *i. e.* the constancy with which they died for their religion. Some there were doubtless converted to Christianity, by observing this. And it would have been a vain thing for persons to have become Christians upon this motive, if the martyrs, by losing their lives for religion, became utterly extinct, and were to live no more. But the church at Corinth had not, in all probability, suffered much persecution at this time, or seen many instances of martyrdom among them, nor many converts made by the constancy and firmness which the martyrs discovered. Not to observe, that *οὐ μέλει* seems to be too general an expression, to mean only the martyred dead. It is as easy an explication of the phrase, as any I have met with, and as pertinent to the argument, to suppose the *οὐ μέλει* to mean some among the Corinthians, who had been taken off by the hand of God. We read, that *many were sickly among them, and many slept*, chap. xi. 38. because of their disorderly behaviour at the Lord's table. These executions might terrify some into Christianity; as the miraculous earthquake did the jaylor, *Acts xvi. 29, 30, &c.* Persons baptized on such an occasion might be properly said to be baptized for the dead, *i. e.* on their accounts. And the *οὐ βαπτίζομενοι* (the baptized), and the *οὐ μέλει* (the dead), answer to one another; and upon this supposition the Corinthians could not mistake the apostle's meaning. Now, says he, what shall they do, and why were they baptized, if the dead rise not? You have a general persuasion these men have done right, and acted wisely, and as they ought, on this occasion. But why, if the dead rise not? Seeing they may perhaps hasten their death by provoking a jealous God, and have no hopes beyond it? But whether this be the meaning, or whatever else be, doubtless the apostle's argument was good, and intelligible to the Corinthians. And his next is as plain to us.

(4.) He argues from the absurdity of his own and other Christians conduct upon this supposition. (1.) It would be a foolish thing for them to run so many hazards, ver. 30. *Why stand we in jeopardy every hour?* Why do we expose ourselves to continual peril? We Christians, especially we apostles? Every one knows, that it was dangerous being a Christian, and much more a preacher and apostle at that time. Now, saith the apostle, what fools are we to run these hazards, if we have no better hopes beyond death, if when we die, we die wholly, and revive no more? Note, Christianity were a foolish profession, if it proposed no hopes beyond this life, at least in such hazardous times, as attended the first profession of it. It required men to risque all the blessings and comforts of this life, and to face and endure all the evils of it, without any future prospects. And is this a character of his religion fit for a Christian to endure? And must he not fix this character on it, if he gives up his future hopes, and denies the resurrection of the dead? This argument the apostle brings home to himself. *I protest*, says he, *by your rejoicing in Christ Jesus*, *i. e.* by all the comforts of Christianity, all the peculiar succours and supports of our holy faith, that *I die daily*, ver. 31. He was in continual danger of death, and carried his life, as we say, *in his hand*. And why should he thus expose himself, if he had no hopes after life? To live in daily view and expectation of death, and yet have no prospect beyond it, must be very heartless and uncomfortable, and his case, upon this account a very melancholy one. He had need be very well assured of the resurrection of the dead, or he was guilty of extreme weakness, in hazarding all that was dear to him in this world, and his life into the bargain. He had encountered very great difficulties, and fierce enemies, he had fought with beasts at Ephesus, ver. 32. and was in danger of being pulled to pieces by an enraged multitude, stirred up by Demetrius and the other crafts-men, *Acts xix. 28.* Though some understand this literally of Paul's being exposed to fight with wild beasts in the amphitheater at a Roman shew in that city. And Nicephorus tells a formal story to this purpose, and of the miraculous complaisance of the lions to him when they came near him. But so remarkable a trial and circumstance of his life, methinks, should not have been passed over by Luke, and much less by himself, when he gives us so large and particular a detail of his sufferings, *2 Cor. xi. 24, ad fin.* When he mentions, that he was five times scourged of the Jews, thrice beaten with rods, once stoned, thrice shipwrecked, it is strange he should not have said he was once exposed to fight with the beasts. I take it therefore, that this fighting with beasts is a figurative expression; the beasts

intended were men of a fierce and ferine disposition: and that this refers to the passage above-cited. Now, saith he, what advantage have I from such contests, *if the dead rise not?* Why should I die daily, expose myself daily to the danger of dying by violent hands, if the dead rise not? And if *post mortem nihil*, if I am to perish by death, and expect nothing after it? Could any thing be more weak? And was Paul so senseless? Had he given the Corinthians any ground to entertain such a thought of him? If he had not been well assured death would have been to his advantage, would he in this stupid manner have thrown away his life? Could any thing but the sure hopes of a better life after death, have extinguished the love of life in him to this degree? What advantage it me, if the dead rise not? What can I propose to myself? Note, It is very lawful and fit for a Christian to propose advantage to himself by his fidelity to God. Thus did Paul. Thus did our blessed Lord himself, *Heb. xii. 2.* And thus we are bid to do after his example, and *have our fruit to holiness, that our end may be everlasting life*. This is the very end of our faith, *viz. the salvation of our souls*, *1 Pet. i. 9.* Not only what it will issue in, but what we should aim at. (2.) It would be a much wiser thing to take the comforts of this life; *Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die*, ver. 32. turn epicures. Thus this sentence means in the prophet, *Isa. xxii. 13.* Let us even live like beasts, if we must die like them. This would be a wiser course, if there be no resurrection, no after-life or state, than to abandon all the pleasures of life, and offer and expose ourselves to all the miseries of life, and live in continual peril of perishing by savage rage and cruelty. This passage also plainly implies, as I have hinted above, that those who denied the resurrection among the Corinthians were perfect Sadducees; of whose principles we have this account in the holy writings, that they say *there is no resurrection, neither angel nor spirit*, *Acts xxiii. 8.* that is, that the man is all body, that there is nothing in him to survive the body, nor will that, when once he is dead, ever revive again. Such Sadducees were the men against whom the apostle argues here. Otherwise his arguments had no force in them. For though the body should never revive, yet as long as the mind survived it, he might have much advantage from all the hazards he run for Christ's sake. Nay, it is certain that the mind is to be the principal seat and subject of the heavenly glory and happiness. But if there be no hopes after death, would not every wise man prefer an easy comfortable life before such a wretched one as the apostle led? nay, and endeavour to enjoy the comforts of life as fast as possible, because the continuance of it is short? Note, Nothing but the hopes of better things hereafter can enable a man to forego all the comforts and pleasures here, and embrace poverty, contempt, misery, and death. Thus did the apostles and primitive Christians: but how wretched was their case, and how foolish their conduct, if they deceived themselves, and abused the world with vain and false hopes?

(5.) The apostle closes his argument with a caution, exhortation, and reproof. (1.) A caution against the dangerous conversation of ill men, men of loose lives and principles. *Be not deceived*, says he, *evil communications corrupt good manners*, ver. 33. Possibly some of those who said there was no resurrection of the dead, were men of loose lives, and endeavoured to countenance their vicious practices by so corrupt a principle: and had that speech often in their mouths, *Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die*. Now, the apostle grants, that the talk was to the purpose, if there were no future state. But having confuted their principle, he now warns the Corinthians how dangerous such mens conversation must prove. He tells them they would likely be corrupted by them, and fall in with their course of life, if they gave into their evil principles. Note, Bad company and conversation are likely to make bad men. Those who would keep their innocence must keep good company. Error and vice are infectious; and if we would avoid the contagion, we must keep clear of those who have taken it. *He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed*, *Prov. xiii. 20.* (2.) Here is an exhortation to break off their sins and rouse themselves, and lead a more holy and righteous life, ver. 34. *Awake to righteousness*, or awake righteously, *ἐκνήψατε δικαίως*, and sin not, or sin no more. Rouse yourselves, break off your sins by repentance; renounce and forsake every evil way, correct whatever is amiss, and do not, by sloth and stupidity, be led away into such conversation and principles, as will sap your Christian hopes, and corrupt your practice. The disbelief of a future state destroys all virtue and piety. But the best improvement to be made of the truth, is to cease from sin, and set ourselves to the business of religion, and that in good earnest. If there will be a resurrection and a future life, we should live and act as those that believe it; and should not give into such senseless and sottish notions, as will debauch our morals, and render us loose and sensual in our lives. (3.) Here is a reproof, and a sharp one to some at least among them. *Some of you have not the knowledge of God, I speak this to your shame*. Note, It is a shame in Christians not to have the knowledge of God. Christian religion gives the best information that can be had about God, his nature, and grace, and government. They who profess this religion reproach themselves, by remaining without the knowledge of God. For it must be owing to their own sloth and slight of God,

God, that they are ignorant of him. And is it not an horrid shame for a Christian to slight God, and be so wretchedly ignorant in matters, that so nearly and highly concern him? Note also, That it must be ignorance of God, that leads men into the disbelief of a resurrection and future life. Those that know God, know that he will not abandon his faithful servants, and leave them exposed to such hardships and sufferings without any *recompence of reward*. They would know he is not unfaithful, nor unkind, to forget their labour and patience, their faithful services, and chearful sufferings, nor let their *labour be in vain*. But I am apt to think the expression has a much stronger meaning; that there were atheistical people amongst them, that hardly owned a God, or one that had any concern with, or took any cognizance of, human affairs. These were a scandal and shame to any Christian church indeed. Note, Real atheism lies at the bottom of mens disbelief of a future state. They who own a God and a providence, and observe how unequal the distributions of the present life are, and how frequently the best men fare worst, can hardly doubt an after-state where every thing will be set to rights.

35. But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? 36. Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die. 37. And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain. 38. But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body. 39. All flesh is not the same flesh: but *there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds*. 40. *There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another*. 41. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for *one star differeth from another star in glory*. 42. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption: 43. It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power: 44. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. 45. And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul, the last Adam *was made a quickening spirit*. 46. Howbeit, that *was* not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. 47. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. 48. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. 49. And as we have born the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. 50. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

The apostle comes now to answer a plausible and principal objection against the doctrine of the *resurrection of the dead*. Concerning which, observe, (1.) The proposal of the objection. *Some man will say, how are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come?* ver. 35. The objection is plainly two-fold. (1.) How are they raised up, that is, by what means? How should they be raised, what power is equal to this effect? It was an opinion that prevailed much among the *heathens*, and the *Sadducees* seem to have been in the same sentiment, that it was not within the compass of divine power, *mortales æternitate donare, aut revocare defunctos*; to make mortal men immortal, or revive and restore the dead. Such sort of men they seem to have been, who among the Corinthians denied the resurrection of the dead, and object here *How are they raised?* How should they be raised? Is it not utterly impossible? The (2.) Part of the objection is about the quality of their bodies who shall rise. *With what body will they come?* Will it be with the same body? With like shape, and form, and stature, and members, and qualities, or various? The former objection is, that of those who opposed the doctrine, the latter the enquiry of curious doubters. To the (1.) The apostle answers, by telling them this was to be brought about by divine power, that very power which they had all observed, to do somewhat very like it, year after year, in the death and revival of the corn; and therefore it was an argument of great weakness and stupidity, to doubt whether the resurrection of the dead might not be effected by the same power. *Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened unless it die*, ver. 36. It must first corrupt, before it will quicken and spring up. It not only sprouts after it is dead, but it must die that it may live. And why should any be so foolish as to imagine, that the man once

dead cannot be made to live again, by the same power which every year brings the dead grain to life? This is the substance of what he answers to the first question. Note, It is a foolish thing to question the divine power to raise the dead, when we see him every day quickening and reviving things that are dead. But he is longer in answering to the second enquiry.

He begins, (1.) By observing, that there is a change made in the grain that is sown. It is *not that body which shall be* that is sown, but *bare grain* of wheat or barley, &c. but God gives it such a body as he will, and in such way as he will, only so as to distinguish every kind from each other. Every seed sown has its *proper body*, is constituted of such materials, and figured in such a manner as is proper for it, proper to that kind. This is plainly in the divine power, though we no more know how it is done, than we know how a dead man is raised to life again. It is certain the grain undergoes a great change; and it is intimated in this passage, and so will the dead when they rise again, and live again in their bodies after death.

(2.) He proceeds hence to observe, that there is a great deal of variety among other bodies, as there is among plants, as (1.) In bodies of flesh. *All flesh is not the same*. That of men is of one kind, that of beasts another, another that of fishes, and that of birds another, ver. 39. There is a variety in all the kinds, and somewhat peculiar in every kind to distinguish it from the other. (2.) In bodies celestial and terrestrial, there is also a difference. And what is for the glory of one, is not for the other. For the true glory of every being consists in its fitness for its rank and state. Earthly bodies are not adapted to the heavenly regions, nor heavenly bodies fitted to the condition of earthly beings. Nay, (3.) There is a variety of glory among heavenly bodies themselves. *There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars, for one star differs from another star in glory*, ver. 41. All this is to intimate to us, that the bodies of the dead when they rise will be so far changed, that they will be fitted for the heavenly regions, and that there will be a variety of glories among the bodies of the dead when they shall be raised, as there is among the sun, and moon, and stars, nay among the stars themselves. And all this carries an intimation along with it, that it must be as easy to divine power to raise the dead, and recover their mouldered bodies, as out of the same materials to form so many different kinds of flesh and plants, and, for ought we know, celestial bodies as well as terrestrial ones. The sun and stars may, for ought we know, be composed of the same materials as the earth we tread on, though so much refined and changed by the divine skill and power. And can he out of the same materials form such various beings, and yet not be able to raise the dead? Having thus prepared the way, he comes,

(3.) To speak directly to the point. *So also, saith he, is the resurrection of the dead*. So, so, as the plant growing out of the putrified grain, so as no longer to be a terrestrial but a celestial body, and varying in glory from the other dead, who are raised, as one star doth from another. But he instances in some particulars, as (1.) *It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown*. Burying the dead is like sowing them, it is like committing the seed to the earth, that it may spring out of it again. And our bodies that are sown, are corruptible, liable to putrify and moulder, and crumble to dust: but when we rise, they will be out of the power of the grave, and never more be liable to corruption. (2.) *It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory*. Ours is at present a vile body, *Phil. iii. 21*. Nothing is more loathsome than a dead body, it is thrown into the grave, *as a despised and broken vessel, in which there is no pleasure*. But at the resurrection a glory will be put upon it. It will be made like *the glorious body of our Saviour*. It will be purged from all the dregs of earth, and refined into æthereal substance, and shine out with a splendor resembling his. (3.) *It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power*. It is laid in the earth a poor helpless thing, wholly in the power of death, deprived of all vital capacities and powers, of life and strength: it is utterly unable to move or stir. But when we rise, our bodies will have heavenly life and vigour infused into them. They shall be hail, and firm, and durable, and lively, and liable no more to any infirmity, weakness, or decay. (4.) *It is sown a natural, or animal, body, σῶμα ψυχικόν, a body fitted to the low condition, and sensitive pleasures and enjoyments of this life, which are all gross in comparison of the heavenly state and enjoyments*. But when we rise, it will be quite otherwise. Our body will rise spiritual. Not that body will be changed into spirit, this would be a contradiction in our common conceptions. It would be as much as to say, body changed into what is not body, matter made immaterial. The expression is to be understood comparatively. We shall at the resurrection have bodies purified and refined to the last degree, made light and agile; and though they are not changed into spirit, yet made fit to be perpetual associates of *spirits made perfect*. And why should it not be as much in the power of God to raise incorruptible, glorious, lively, spiritual bodies, out of the ruins of those vile, corruptible, lifeless, and animal ones, as first to make matter out of nothing, and then out of the same mass of matter produce such variety of beings both in earth and heaven? *To God all things are possible*. And this cannot be impossible.

(4.) He illustrates this by a comparison of the first and second Adam. *There is an animal body*, saith he, *and there is a spiritual body*; and then goes into the comparison in several instances. (1.) As we have our *natural body*, the animal body we have in this world, from the first Adam, we expect our spiritual body from the second. This is implied in the whole comparison. (2.) And this is but consonant to the different characters these two persons bear. The first Adam was *made a living soul*, such a being as ourselves, and with a power of propagating such beings as himself, and conveying to them a nature and animal body like his own, but none other, nor better. The second Adam is a quickening spirit, he is *the resurrection and the life*, John xi. 25. He hath *life in himself*, and *quickeneth whom he will*, John v. 20, 21. The first man *was of the earth*, made out of the earth, and was earthy; his body was fitted to the region of his abode: but the second Adam is the *Lord from heaven*, he *who came down from heaven*, and *giveth life to the world*, John vi. 33. *He who came down from heaven*, and *was in heaven at the same time*, John iii. 13. The Lord of heaven and earth. If the first Adam could communicate to us natural and animal bodies, cannot the second Adam make our bodies spiritual ones? If the deputed lord of this lower creation could do the one, cannot the Lord from heaven, the Lord of heaven and earth do the other? (3.) We must first have natural bodies from the first Adam, before we can have spiritual bodies from the second, ver. 46. *We must bear the image of the earthy, before we can bear the image of the heavenly*. Such is the established order of providence. We must have weak, frail, mortal bodies by descent from the first Adam, before we can have lively, spiritual, and immortal ones by the quickening power of the second. We must die before we can live to die no more. (4.) Yet if we are Christ's, true believers in him, (for this whole discourse relates to the resurrection of the saints) it is as certain that we shall have spiritual bodies, as it is now that we have natural or animal ones. By these we are as the first Adam earthy, we bear his image; by those we shall be as the second Adam, have bodies like his own, heavenly, and so bear his image. And we are as certainly intended to bear the one, as we have born the other. As sure therefore as we have had natural bodies, we shall have spiritual ones. The dead in Christ shall not only rise, but shall rise thus gloriously changed.

(5.) He sums up this argument, by assigning the reason of this change, ver. 50. *Now this I say, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor doth corruption inherit incorruption*. The natural body is flesh and blood, consisting of *bones, muscles, nerves, veins, arteries*, and their several fluids; and as such it is of a corruptible frame and form, liable to dissolution, to rot and moulder. But no such thing shall inherit the heavenly regions; for this were for *corruption to inherit incorruption*, which is little better than a contradiction in terms. The heavenly inheritance is *incorruptible, and never fadeth away*, 1 Pet. i. 4. How can this be possessed by flesh and blood, which is corruptible, and will fade away? It must be changed into ever-during substance, before it can be capable of possessing the heavenly inheritance. The sum is, that the bodies of the saints, when they shall rise again, will be greatly changed from what they are now, and much for the better. They are now corruptible flesh and blood, they will be then incorruptible, glorious, and spiritual bodies, fitted to the celestial world and state, where they are ever afterwards to dwell and have their eternal inheritance.

51. Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump (for the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.) 53. For this corruptible must but on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. 55. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? 56. The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. 57. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

To confirm what he had said of this change, he here, (1.) Tells them what had been concealed from them, or unknown to them till then, *that all the saints should not die, but all would be changed*. They that are alive at our Lord's coming, will be caught up into the clouds, without dying, 1 Thess. iv. 17. But it is plain from this passage, that it will not be without changing from corruption to incorruption. The frame of their living bodies shall be thus altered, as well as those that are dead. And *this in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye*, ver. 52. What cannot almighty power effect? That power that calls the dead into life, can surely thus soon and suddenly change the living; for changed they must be as well as the dead, *because flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God*. This is the mystery which the

apostle shews the Corinthians: *Behold, I shew you a mystery*; or bring into open light a truth dark and unknown before. Note, There are many mysteries shewn to us in the gospel. Many truths, that before were utterly unknown, are there made known; many truths that were but dark and obscure before, are there brought into open day, and plainly revealed. And many things are in part revealed, that will never be fully known, nor perhaps clearly understood. The apostle here makes known a truth unknown before, *viz.* that the saints living at our Lord's second coming, would not die, but be changed; that this change would be made in a moment, *in the twinkling of an eye*, and *at the sound of the last trump*. For, as he tells us elsewhere, the Lord himself shall descend with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and the trump of God, 1 Thess. iv. 16. so here, the trumpet must sound. It is the loud summons of all the living and all the dead, to come and appear at the tribunal of Christ. At this summons the graves shall open, the dead saints shall rise incorruptible, and the living saints be changed into the same incorruptible state, ver. 52.

(2.) He assigns the reason of this change, ver. 53. *For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality*. How otherwise could the man be a fit inhabitant of the incorruptible regions, or be fitted to possess the eternal inheritance? How can that which is corruptible and mortal, enjoy what is incorruptible, permanent, and immortal? This corruptible body must be made incorruptible, this mortal body must be changed into immortal, that the man may be capable of enjoying the happiness designed for him. Note, It is *this corruptible must put on incorruption*, the demolished fabrick that must be reared again. What is sown must be quickened. Saints will come in their own bodies, ver. 38. not in other bodies.

(3.) He lets us know what will follow upon this change of the living and dead in Christ. *Then shall be brought to pass that saying, Death is swallowed up in victory*, or *he will swallow up death in victory*, Isa. xxv. 8. *For mortality shall be then swallowed up of life*, 2 Cor. v. 4. And death perfectly subdued and conquered, and saints for ever delivered from its power. Such a conquest shall be obtained over it, that it shall for ever disappear in those regions, to which our Lord will bear his risen saints. And therefore will the saints hereupon sing their *ἐπινίκιον*, their song of triumph. Then when this mortal shall have put on immortality, will death be swallowed up, for ever swallowed up, *eis vñc*. Christ hinders it from swallowing his saints when they die; but when they rise again, death shall, as to them, be swallowed up for ever. And upon this destruction of death will they break out into a song of triumph.

(1.) They will glory over death as a vanquished enemy, and insult this great and terrible destroyer. Oh! *Death, where is thy sting?* "Where is now thy sting, thy power to hurt? What mischief hast thou done us? We were dead, but behold we live again, and shall die no more. Thou art vanquished and disarmed, and we are out of the reach of thy deadly dart. Where now is thy fatal artillery, thy stores of death? We fear no farther mischiefs from thee, nor heed thy weapons, but defy thy power, and despise thy wrath." And *Oh grave! where is thy victory?* "Where now is thy victory? What is become of it? Where are the spoils and trophies of it? Once we were thy prisoners, but the prison doors are burst open, the locks and bolts have been forced to give way, and our shackles are knocked off, and we are for ever released. *Captivity is taken captive*. The imaginary victor is conquered, and forced to resign his conquests, and release his captives. Thy triumphs, grave, are at an end. The bands of death are loosed, and we at liberty, and are never more to be hurt by death, or imprisoned in the grave." In a moment the power of death, and the conquests and spoils of the grave are gone. And as to the saints, the very signs of them will not remain. *Where are they?* Thus will they raise themselves, when they become immortal; and to the honour of their Saviour, and the praise of divine grace, glory over vanquished death.

(2.) The foundation for this triumph is here intimated. (1.) In the account given whence death had its power to hurt. *The sting of death is sin*, that gives venom to his dart, that only puts it into the power of death to hurt and kill. And sin unpardoned, and nothing else, can keep any under his power. And the strength of sin is the law. It is the divine threatening against the transgressors of the law, the curse there denounced that gives power to sin. Note, Sin is the parent of death, and gives it all its hurtful power. *By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin*, Rom. v. 12. It is its cursed progeny and offspring. (2.) In the account given of the victory saints obtain over it through Jesus Christ, ver. 57. The sting of death is sin, but Christ, by dying, has taken out this sting, he has made atonement for sin, he has obtained remission of it. It may hiss therefore, but it cannot hurt. *The strength of sin is the law*, but the curse of the law is removed by our Redeemer's becoming a curse for us. So that sin is deprived of its strength and sting, through Christ, i. e. by his incarnation, suffering and death. Death may seize the believer, but cannot sting him, cannot hold him in its power. There is a day coming, when the grave shall open, the bands of death be loosed, the dead saints revive, and become incorruptible and

and immortal, and put out of the reach of death for ever. And then will it plainly appear, that as to them death will have lost its strength and sting; and all by the mediation of Christ, by his dying in their room. By dying he conquered death, and spoiled the grave. And through faith in him, believers become sharers in his conquests. They rejoice before-hand many times in the hope of this victory; and when they rise glorious from the grave, will boldly triumph over death. Note, It is altogether owing to the grace of God in Christ, that sin is pardoned, and death disarmed. The law puts arms into the hand of death to destroy the sinner, but pardon of sin takes away this power from the law, and deprives death of its strength and sting. It is *by the grace of God, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus*, that we are *freely justified*, Rom. iii. 24. It is no wonder therefore, (3.) If this triumph of the saints over death should issue in thanksgiving to God. *Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through Christ Jesus our Lord*, ver. 57. The way to sanctify all our joy, is to make it tributary to the praise of God. Then only do we enjoy our blessings and honours in an holy manner, when God has his revenue of glory out of it, and we are free to pay it to him. And this really improves and exalts our satisfaction. We are conscious at once of having done our duty, and enjoyed our pleasure. And what can be more joyous in itself, than the saints triumph over death when they shall rise again? And shall they not then rejoice in the Lord, and be glad in the God of their salvation? Shall not their souls magnify the Lord? When he shews such wonders to the dead, shall they not arise and praise him? Psa. lxxxviii. 10. Those who remain under the power of death, can have no heart to praise; but such conquests and triumphs will certainly tune the tongues of saints to thankfulness and praise: Praise for the victory. It is great and glorious in itself, and for the means whereby it is obtained; it is given of God through Christ Jesus. A victory obtained not by our power, but the power of God; not given because we are worthy, but because Christ is so, and has by dying obtained this conquest for us. Must not this circumstance endear the victory to us, and heighten our praise to God? Note, How many springs of joy to the saints, and thanksgiving to God are opened by the death and resurrection, the sufferings and conquests, of our Redeemer? With what acclamations will saints, rising from the dead, applaud him? How will the heaven of heavens resound his praises for ever? *Thanks be to God*, will be the burden of their song, and angels will join in the chorus, and declare their consent with a loud *Amen, Hallelujah*.

58. Therefore my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

In this verse we have the improvement of the whole argument, in an exhortation, enforced by a motive resulting plainly from it. (1.) An exhortation, and this threefold. (1.) That they should be steadfast, *ἐσθαρτοι*, firm, fixed in the faith of the gospel, that gospel which he had preached, and they had received, viz. *That Christ died for our sins, and rose again the third day, according to the scriptures*, ver. 3, 4. And the faith of the glorious resurrection of the sanctified dead, which, as he had shewn, had so near and necessary a connexion with the former. Do not let your belief of these truths be shaken or staggered. They are most certain, and of the last importance. Note, Christians should be steadfast believers of this great article of the resurrection of the dead. It is evidently founded on the death of Christ. *Because he lives, his servants shall live also*, John xiv. 19. And it is of the last importance. A disbelief of a future life, will open a way to all manner of licentiousness, and corrupt mens morals to the last degree. It will be easy and natural from hence to infer, that we may live like beasts, and eat and drink, for to-morrow we die. (2.) He exhorts them to be *immoveable*, viz. in their hope and expectation of this great privilege, of being raised incorruptible and immortal. Christians should not be moved away from this hope of the gospel, Col. i. 23. this *glorious and blessed hope*. They should not renounce nor resign their comfortable expectations. They are not vain, but solid hopes, built upon sure foundations, the purchase and power of their risen Saviour, and the promise of God to whom it is impossible to lie. Hopes that shall be their most powerful supports under all the pressures of life, the most effectual antidotes against the fears of death, and the most quickening motives to diligence and perseverance in Christian duty. Should they part with these hopes? should they suffer them to be shaken? Note, Christians should live in the most firm expectation of a blessed resurrection. This hope *should be an anchor to their souls, firm and sure*, Heb. vi. 19. (3.) He exhorts them to *abound in the work of the Lord*, and that *always*, in the Lord's service, in obeying the Lord's commands. They should be diligent and persevering herein, and *going ever on towards perfection*. They should be continually making advances in true piety, and ready and apt for every good work. The most chearful duty, the greatest diligence, the most constant perseverance, is what becomes those who have such glorious hopes. Can we too much abound in zeal and diligence in the Lord's work, when we are secured of such abundant recompences in a future life? What vigour and resolu-

tion, what constancy and patience should those hopes inspire! Note, Christians should not flint themselves as to their growth in holiness, but be always improving in sound religion, and abounding in the work of the Lord.

(2.) The motive resulting from the former discourse, is, that their *labour shall not be in vain in the Lord*; nay, *they know it shall not*. They have the best grounds in the world to build upon. They have all the assurance that can rationally be expected. As sure as Christ is risen, they shall rise. And Christ is as surely risen, as the scriptures are true and the word of God. The apostle saw him after his death, testified this truth to the world, in the face of a thousand deaths and dangers, and confirmed it by miraculous powers received from him. Is there any room to doubt a fact so well attested? Note, True Christians have undoubted evidence that their *labour will not be in vain in the Lord*. Not their most diligent services, nor their most painful sufferings. They will *not be in vain*, not be vain and unprofitable. Note, Christians labour will not be lost labour. They may lose for God, but they shall lose nothing by him. Nay, there is more implied than is expressed in this phrase. It means, that they shall be abundantly rewarded. He will never be found unjust to forget their *labour of love*, Heb. vi. 10. Nay, he will *do exceeding abundantly above what they can now ask or think*. Neither the services they do for him, nor the sufferings they endure for him here, are worthy to be compared with the joy hereafter to be revealed in them, Rom. viii. 18. Note, They that serve God have good wages. They cannot do too much, nor suffer too much for so good a master. If they serve him now, they shall see him hereafter; if they suffer for him on earth, they shall reign with him in heaven; if they die for his sake, they shall rise again from the dead, be crowned with glory, honour, and immortality, and inherit eternal life.

CHAP. XVI.

In this chapter the apostle, (1.) Gives direction about some charitable collection to be made in this church, for the afflicted and impoverished churches in Judea, ver. 1—5. (2.) He talks of making them a visit, ver. 6—10. (3.) He recommends Timothy to them, and tells them Apollos intended to come to them, ver. 11—13. (4.) He presses them to watchfulness, constancy, charity, and to pay a due regard to all who helped him, and his fellow-labourers in their work, ver. 14—19. (5.) After salutations from others, and his own, he closes the epistle with a solemn admonition to them, and his good wishes for them, ver. 20, ad fin.

1. NOW concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. 2. Upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. 3. And when I come, whomsoever you shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem. 4. And if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me.

In this chapter Paul closes this long epistle with some particular matters of less moment. But as all was written by divine inspiration, it is all profitable for our instruction. He begins with directing them about a charitable collection on a particular occasion, viz. the distresses and poverty of the Christians in Judea, that at this time were extraordinary, partly through the general calamities of that nation, and partly through the particular sufferings to which they were exposed. Now concerning this, observe,

(1.) How he introduces his direction. It was not a peculiar service which he required of them. He had given the like orders to the churches of Galatia, ver. 1. He desired them only to conform themselves to the same rules, which he had given to other churches, on the like occasion. He did not desire that others should be eased, and they burdened, 2 Cor. viii. 13. He also prudently mentions these orders of his to the churches of Galatia, to excite emulation, and stir them up to be liberal, according to their circumstances, and the occasion. They who exceeded most churches in spiritual gifts, and, as it is probable, in worldly wealth, (see the argument) sure would not suffer themselves to come behind any, in their bounty to their afflicted brethren. Note, The good examples of other Christians and churches, should stir in us an holy emulation. It is becoming a Christian not to bear to be outdone by a fellow-Christian in any thing virtuous and praiseworthy, provided this consideration only makes him exert himself, not envy others. And the more advantages we have above others, the more should we endeavour to exceed them. The church of Corinth should not be outdone in this service of love by the churches of Galatia, who do not appear to have been enriched with equal spiritual gifts, or outward ability.

(2.) The direction itself. Concerning which, observe,

(1.) The manner in which the collection was to be made. *Every one was to lay by in store*, ver. 2. have a treasury or fund with himself for this purpose. The meaning is, that he should lay by as he could spare from time to time, and by that means make up a sum for this charitable purpose. Note, It is a good thing to lay up a store for good uses. They who *are rich in this world* should be *rich in good works*, 1 Tim. vi. 17, 18. The best way to be so, is to appropriate of their income, and have a treasury for this purpose, a stock for the poor as well as themselves. By this means they will be ready to every good work, as the opportunity offers. And many who labour with their own hands for a livelihood, should so work, *that they may have to give to him that needeth*, Eph. iv. 28. Indeed their treasury for good works can never be very large, (though according to circumstances it may considerably vary) but the best way in the world for them to get a treasury for this purpose, is to lay by from time to time as they can afford. Some of the Greek fathers rightly observe here, that this advice was given for the sake of the poorer among them. They were to lay by from week to week, and not bring in to the common treasury, that by this means their contributions might be easy to themselves, and yet grow into a sum for the relief of their brethren. *Every little*, as the proverb says, *would make a mickle*. Indeed, all our charity and benevolence should be free and chearful, and for that reason should be made as easy to ourselves as may be. And what more likely way to make us easy in this matter, than thus to lay by! We may chearfully give when we know we can spare, and that we have been laying by in store that we may.

(2.) Here is the measure in which they are to lay by, *as God hath prospered them*; *τις ἐνδοξάται*, as he hath been prospered, viz. by divine providence; as God has been pleased to bless and succeed his labours and business. Note, All our business and labour is that to us, which God is pleased to make it. It is not the *diligent hand* that will *make rich* by itself, without the *divine blessing*, Prov. x. 4, 22. compared. Our prosperity and success is from God, and not from ourselves. And he is to be owned in all, and honoured with all. It is his bounty and blessing to which we owe all we have; and whatever we have is to be used, and employed, and improved for him. His right in ourselves, and all that is ours, is to be owned and yielded to him. And what argument more proper to excite us to charity to the people and children of God, than to consider all we have as his gift, as coming from him. Note, When God blesses and prospers us, we should be ready to relieve and comfort his needy servants. When his bounty flows forth upon us, we should not confine it to ourselves, but let it stream out on others. The good we receive from him, should stir us up to do good to others, to resemble him in our beneficence. And therefore the more good we receive from God, the more we should do good to others. They were to *lay by as God had blessed them*; in that *proportion*. The more they had through God's blessing gained by their business or labour, their traffick or work, the more they were to lay by. Note, God expects that our beneficence to others, should hold some proportion to his bounty to us. All we have is from God; the more he gives, (circumstances being considered) the more he enables us to give, and the more he expects we should give; that we should give more than others that *are* less able; that we should give more than ourselves when we *were* less able. And on the other hand, from him to whom God gives less, he expects less. He is no tyrant or cruel taskmaster to exact brick without straw, or expect men shall do more good than he gives ability. No, *where there is a willing mind, he accepts according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not*, 2 Cor. viii. 12. But as he prospers and blesses us, and puts us into a capacity to do good, he expects we should. The greater ability he gives, the more enlarged should our hearts be, and the more open our hands. But where the ability is less, the hands cannot be as open, however willing the mind may be, and large the heart. Nor doth God expect it.

(3.) Here is the time when this is to be done. *The first day of the week*, *κατὰ μίαν σαββάτων*, Luke xxiv. 1. the Lord's day, the Christian holiday: when publick assemblies were held, and publick worship was celebrated, and the Christian institutions and *mysteries* (as the antients called them) were attended upon; then let every one lay by him. It is a day of holy rest. And the more vacation the mind has from worldly cares and toils, the more disposition hath it to shew mercy. And the other duties of the day should stir us up to the performance of this. Works of charity should always accompany works of piety. True piety towards God will beget kind and friendly dispositions towards men. *This command have we from him, that he who loveth God, love his brother also*, 1 John iv. 24. Works of mercy are the genuine fruits of true love to God, and therefore are a proper service on his own day. Note, God's day is a proper season on which to lay up for charitable uses, or lay out in them, according as he hath prospered us. It is paying tribute for the blessings of the past week, and it is a proper way to procure his blessing on the work of our hands for the next.

(3.) We have here the disposal of the collections thus made. The apostle would have every thing ready against he came, and therefore gave direction as before, *that there be no gatherings when*

I come, ver. 2. But when he came, as to the disposal of it he would leave it much to themselves. The charity was theirs, and it was fit they should dispose of it in their own way, so it answered its end, and was applied to the right use. Paul no more pretended to lord it over the purses of his hearers, than over their faith. He would not meddle with their contributions without their consent. He tells them, (1.) That they should give letters of credence, and send messengers of their own with their liberality, ver. 3. This would be a proper testimony of their respect and brotherly-love to their distressed brethren, to send their gift by members of their own body, trusty and tender-hearted, that would have compassion on their suffering brethren, and a Christian concern for them, and not defraud them. It would argue they were very hearty in this service, when they should send some of their own body on so long and hazardous a journey or voyage, to convoy their liberality. Note, We should not only charitably relieve our poor fellow-Christians, but do it in such a way, as will best signify our compassion to them, and care of them. (2.) He offers to go with their messengers, if they thought proper, ver. 4. His business, as an apostle, was *not to serve tables*, but to *give himself to the word and prayer*. But yet he was never wanting to set afoot or help forward a work of charity, when an opportunity offered. He would go to Jerusalem to carry the contributions of the church of Corinth to their suffering brethren, rather than they should go without them, or the charity of the Corinthians fail of a due effect. It was no hinderance to his preaching work, but a great furtherance to the success of it, to shew such a tender and benign disposition of mind. Note, Ministers are doing their proper business, when they are promoting or helping in works of charity. Paul stirs up the Corinthians to gather for the relief of the churches in Judea, and he is ready to go with their messengers, to convey what is gathered: and he is still in the way of his duty, in the business of his office.

5. Now I will come unto you, when I shall pass through Macedonia: (for I do pass through Macedonia) 6. And it may be that I will abide, yea and winter with you, that ye may bring me on my journey, whithersoever I go. 7. For I will not see you now by the way, but I trust to tarry a while with you, if the Lord permit. 8. But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost. 9. For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and *there are many adversaries*.

In this passage the apostle notifies and explains his purpose of coming to visit them. Concerning which, observe, (1.) *His purpose*. He intended to pass out of Asia, where he now was, vide ver. 8, 19. and to go through Macedonia into Achaia, where Corinth was, and to stay some time with them, and perhaps the winter, ver. 5, 6. He had long laboured in this church, and done much good amongst them, and had his heart set upon doing much more, (if God saw fit) and therefore he had it in his thoughts to see them, and stay with them. Note, The heart of a truly Christian minister, must be much towards that people, among whom he has laboured long, and with remarkable success. No wonder Paul was willing to see Corinth, and stay with them, as long as the other duties of his office would permit. Though some among this people despised him, and made a faction against him, doubtless there were many who loved him tenderly, and paid him all the respect due to an apostle, and their spiritual father. And is it any wonder he should be willing to visit them, and stay with them? And as to the rest, who now carried it with disrespect, he might hope to reduce them to a better temper, and thereby rectify what was out of order in the church, by staying amongst them for some time. It is plain he hoped for some good effect, because he saith, he intended to stay, *that they might bring him on his journey, whithersoever he went*, ver. 6. Not barely bring him going, as we say, accompanying him a little way on the road, but expedite and furnish him for his journey, help and encourage him to it, and provide him for it. He is to be understood of being *brought forward in his journey after a godly sort*, as it is expressed, 3 John ver. 6. so as *nothing might be wanting to him*, as himself speaks, Tit. iii. 13. His stay amongst them he hoped would cure the factious humour, and reconcile them to himself, and their duty. Note, It was a just reason for an apostle to make his abode in a place, that he had a prospect of doing good. (2.) His excuse for not seeing them now, viz. Because it would be *only by the way*, ver. 7. *ἐν παρὸς*, in transitu, en passant. It would only be a transient visit. He would not see them, because he could not stay with them. Such a visit would neither give him nor them any satisfaction or advantage. It would rather raise the appetite than regale it, rather heighten their desires of being together than satisfy them. He loved them so, that he longed for an opportunity to stay with them, take up his abode amongst them for some length of time. This would be more pleasing to himself, and more serviceable to them, than a cursory visit in his way. And therefore he would not see them now, but another time when he could tarry longer. (3.) We have the limitation of this purpose. *I trust to tarry a while with you*,

you, if the Lord permit, ver. 7. Though the apostles wrote under inspiration, they did not know thereby how God would dispose of themselves. Paul had a purpose of coming to Corinth, and staying there, and hoped to do good thereby. This was not a purpose proceeding from any extraordinary motion or impulse of the Spirit of God, not the effect of inspiration. For had it been such, he could not have spoken of it in this manner. A purpose formed thus in him, must have been the purpose of God, signified to him by his Spirit. And could he say he would come to Corinth upon this view only, if God permit? i. e. that he would execute God's own purpose concerning himself, with God's permission? It is to be understood then of a common purpose formed in his own spirit. And concerning all our purposes, it is fit we should say, we will execute them if the Lord permit. Note, All our purposes must be made with submission to the divine providence. We should say, *If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this and that*, Jam. iv. 15. It is not in us to effect our own designs without the divine leave. It is by God's power and permission, and under his direction and conduct, we must do every thing. Heathens have concurred in acknowledging this concern of providence in all our actions and concerns. Sure we should readily own it, and frequently and seriously attend to it.

(4.) We have his purpose expressed of staying at Ephesus for the present. He says, he would *stay there till Pentecost*, ver. 8. It is very probable, he was at the time of writing this epistle in Ephesus, from this passage compared with ver. 19. where he says, *The churches of Asia salute you*. A proper salutation from Ephesus, but hardly so proper had he been at Philippi, as the subscription to this epistle in our common copies has it. The churches of Macedonia salute you, had been much more properly inserted in the close of a letter from Philippi, than the other. But,

(5.) We have the reason given for his staying at Ephesus for the present, *Because a great door, and effectual, was opened to him, and there were many adversaries*, ver. 9. A great door, and effectual, was opened to him. Many were prepared to receive the gospel at Ephesus, and God gave him great success amongst them. He had brought over many to Christ, and he had great hope of bringing over many more. For this reason, he determined to stay a while at Ephesus. Note, Success and a fair prospect of more, was a just reason to determine an apostle to stay and labour in a particular place. And *there are many adversaries*, because a great door, and an effectual, was opened. Note, Great success in the work of the gospel commonly creates many enemies. The devil opposes those most, and makes them most trouble, who most heartily and successfully set themselves to destroy his kingdom. *There were many adversaries*, and therefore the apostle determined to stay. Some think he alludes in this passage to the custom of the Roman Circus, and the doors of it, at which the charioteers were to enter, as their antagonists did at the opposite door. True courage is whetted by opposition. And it is no wonder the Christian courage of the apostle should be animated by the zeal of his adversaries. They were bent to ruin him, and prevent the effect of his ministry at Ephesus, and should he at this time desert his station, and disgrace his character and doctrine? No, the opposition of adversaries only animated his zeal. He was *in nothing daunted by his adversaries*, but the more they raged and opposed, the more he excited himself. *Should such a man as he flee?* Note, Adversaries and opposition do not break the spirits of faithful and successful ministers, but only warm their zeal, and inspire them with fresh courage. Indeed, to labour in vain is heartless and discouraging. This damps the spirits, and breaks the heart. But success will give life and vigour to a minister, though enemies rage and blaspheme, and persecute. It is not the opposition of enemies, but the hardness and obstinacy of his hearers, and the backslidings and revolt of professors, that damp a faithful minister, and break his heart.

10. Now if Timotheus come, see that he may be with you without fear: for he worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do. 11. Let no man therefore despise him: but conduct him forth in peace, that he may come unto me: for I look for him with the brethren. 12. As touching our brother Apollos, I greatly desired him to come unto you with the brethren: but his will was not at all to come at this time; but he will come when he shall have convenient time.

In this passage he (1.) Recommends Timothy to them in several particulars. As, (1.) He bids them take care, that he should be among them without fear, ver. 10. Timothy was sent by the apostle to correct the abuses crept in amongst them, and not only to direct, but to blame, and censure, and reprove those that deserved. They were all in factions, and no doubt the mutual strife and hatred run very high amongst them. There were some very rich, as it is probable, and many very proud upon account both of their outward wealth and spiritual gifts. Proud spirits cannot easily bear reproof. It was reasonable therefore to think young Timothy might be roughly used. And the apostle warns them against using him ill. Not but that he was prepared

for the worst: but whatever his firmness and prudence might be, it was their duty to behave themselves well towards him, and not discourage and dishearten him in his Lord's work. They should not fly out into resentment at his reproof. Note, Christians should bear faithful reproof from their ministers, and not terrify and discourage them from doing their duty. (2.) He warns them against *despising him*, ver. 11. He was but a young man, and alone, as Oecumenius observes. He had no one to back him, and his own youthful face and years commanded but little reverence, and therefore the great pretenders to wisdom amongst them might be apt to entertain contemptuous thoughts of him. Now, says the apostle, guard against this. Not that he distrusted Timothy; he knew that himself would do nothing to bring contempt on his character; he would do nothing to make his youth despicable. But pride was a reigning sin among the Corinthians, and such a caution was but too necessary. Note, Christians should be very careful not to pour contempt on any, but especially on ministers, the faithful ministers of Christ. These, whether young or old, are to be had in high esteem for their works sake. (3.) He tells them, they should give him all due encouragement, use him well whilst he was with them, and as an evidence of this they should send him away in friendship, and well prepared for his journey back again to Paul. This, as I have above observed, is the meaning of *bringing on his journey in peace*, ver. 11. Note, Faithful ministers are not only to be well received by a people, among whom they may for a season minister, but are to be sent away with due respect.

(2.) He assigns the reasons why they should carry it thus towards Timothy. (1.) Because he was employed in the same work as Paul, and acted in it by the same authority, ver. 10. He did not come on Paul's errand amongst them, nor to do his work, but the work of the Lord. Though he was not an apostle, he was assistant to one, and was sent upon this very business by a divine commission. And therefore to vex his spirit would be to grieve the holy Spirit. To despise him would be to despise him that sent him, i. e. not Paul, but Paul's Lord and theirs. Note, They that work the work of the Lord, should be neither terrified nor despised, but treated with all tenderness and respect. Such are all the faithful ministers of the word, though not all in the same rank and degree: pastors and teachers as well as apostles and evangelists. And whilst they are doing their duty, are to be treated with honour and respect. (2.) Another reason is implied: As they were to esteem him for his works sake, so also for Paul's sake, who had sent him to Corinth; not of his own errand indeed, but to work the work of the Lord. *Conduct him forth in peace, that he may come to me, for I look for him with the brethren*, ver. 11. Or, I with the brethren look for him; the original will bear either, *ἐκδεχομαι γὰρ αὐτὸν μετὰ τῶν ἀδελφῶν*, I am expecting his return, and his report concerning you; and shall judge by your conduct towards him what your regard and respect for me will be. Look to it, that you send him back with no evil report. Paul might expect from the Corinthians, that a messenger from him, upon such an errand, should be regarded, and well treated. His services and success among them, his authority with them as an apostle, would challenge this at their hands. They would hardly dare to send back Timothy with a report that would grieve or provoke the apostle. I and the brethren expect his return, wait for the report he is to make, and therefore do not use him ill, but respect him, regard his message, and let him return in peace.

(3.) He informs them of Apollos's purpose to see them. (1.) He himself had greatly desired him to come to them, ver. 12. Though one party amongst them had declared for Apollos against Paul, (if that passage be to be understood literally, *vid. chap. iv. 6.*) yet Paul did not hinder Apollos from going to Corinth in his own absence, nay he pressed him to go thither. He had no suspicions of Apollos, as if he would lessen Paul's interest and respect among them to the advancement of his own. Note, Faithful ministers are not apt to entertain jealousies of each other, or suspect of selfish designs. True charity and brotherly love *think no evil*. And where should these reign, if not in the breasts of the ministers of Christ? (2.) Apollos could not be prevailed on for the present to come, but would at a more convenient season. Perhaps their feuds and factions might render the present season improper. He would not go to be set at the head of a party, and countenance the dividing and contentious humour. When this was subdued by Paul's epistle to them, and Timothy's ministry amongst them, he might conclude a visit would be more proper. Apostles did not vie with each other, but consulted each other's comfort and usefulness. Paul signifies his great regard to the church of Corinth, when they had used him ill, by intreating Apollos to go to them: And Apollos shews his respect to Paul, and his concern to keep up his character and authority, by declining the journey till the Corinthians were in better temper. Note, It is very becoming the ministers of the gospel, to have and manifest a concern for each other's reputation and usefulness.

13. Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. 14. Let all your things be done with charity. 15. I beseech you, brethren, (ye

(ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the first-fruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints) 16. That ye submit your selves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with us and laboureth. 17. I am glad of the coming of Stephanas, and Fortunatus, and Achaicus: for that which was lacking on your part, they have supplied. 18. For they have refreshed my spirit and yours: therefore acknowledge ye them that are such.

In this passage the apostle (1.) Gives some general advices. As, (1.) That *they should watch*, ver. 13. be wakeful, and upon their guard. A Christian is always in danger, and therefore should ever be on the watch. But the danger is greater at some times, and under some circumstances. The Corinthians were in manifest danger upon many accounts. Their feuds run high, the irregularities among them were very great, there were deceivers got amongst them that endeavoured to corrupt their faith in the most important articles, those without which the practice of virtue and piety could never subsist. And sure in such dangerous circumstances it was their concern to watch. Note, If a Christian would be secure he must be on his guard. And the more his danger is, the greater vigilance is needful for his security. (2.) He advises them to *stand fast in the faith*, to keep their ground, adhere to the revelation of God, and not give it up for the wisdom of the world, nor suffer it to be corrupted by it. Stand for the faith of the gospel, and maintain it even to death, and stand in it, so as to abide in the profession of it, and feel, and yield to its influence. Note, A Christian should be fixed in the faith of the gospel, and never desert or renounce it. It is by this faith alone he will be able to keep his ground in an hour of temptation, *it is by faith we stand*, 2 Cor. i. 24. It is by this we must *overcome the world*, 1 John v. 4. Both when it fawns, and when it frowns, when it tempts and when it terrifies. We must stand therefore in the faith of the gospel, if we would maintain our integrity. (3.) He advises them to act like men and be strong; act the manly, firm, and resolved part. Behave strenuously in opposition to the ill men that would divide and corrupt you. Those who would split you into factions, or seduce you from the faith. Be not terrified nor inveigled by them. But shew yourselves men in Christ by your stedfastness, by your sound judgment, and firm resolution. Note, Christians should be manly and firm in all their contests with their enemies, in defending their faith, and maintaining their integrity. They should in an especial manner be so in these points of faith, that lie at the foundation of sound and practical religion; such as were attacked among the Corinthians. These must be maintained with solid judgment, and strong resolution. (4.) He advises them *to do every thing in charity*, ver. 14. Our zeal and constancy must be consistent with charity. When the apostle would have us *play the man* for our faith and religion, he puts in a caution against *playing the devil* for it. We may defend our faith, but we must at the same time maintain our innocence, and not devour and destroy, and think with ourselves that *the wrath of man will work the righteousness of God*, Jam. i. 21. Note, Christians should be careful that charity not only reign in their hearts, but shine out in their lives, nay in their most manly defences of the faith of the gospel. There is a great difference between constancy and cruelty, between Christian firmness and feverish wrath and transport. Christianity never appears to so much advantage, as when the charity of Christians is most conspicuous; when they can bear with their mistaken brethren, and oppose the open enemies of their holy faith, in love; *when every thing is done in charity*; when they carry it towards one another, and towards all men, with a spirit of meekness and good-will.

(2.) He gives some particular directions, how they should carry it towards some, that had been eminently serviceable to the cause of Christ among them. (1.) He gives us their character. (1.) The household of Stephanas is mentioned by him, and their character is, that they were the *first-fruits of Achaia*, the first converts to Christianity in that region of Greece, in which Corinth was. Note, It is an honourable character to any man to be early a Christian, betimes in Christ. But they had moreover addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints, to serve the saints. They have disposed and devoted themselves, *ἑταξάν ἑαυτοὺς*, to serve the saints, to do service to the saints. It is not meant of the ministry of the word properly, but of serving them in other respects, supplying their wants, helping and assisting them upon all occasions, both in their temporal and spiritual concern. The family of Stephanas seem to have been a family of rank and importance in those parts, and yet they willingly offered themselves to this service. Note, It is an honour to persons of the highest rank to devote themselves to the service of the saints. I do not mean to change ranks, and become proper servants to their inferiors, but freely and voluntarily to help them, and do good to them in all their concerns. (2.) He mentions Stephanas, and Fortunatus, and Achaicus, as coming to him from the church of Corinth. The account he gives of them is, that they supplied the deficiencies of the church towards him, and by so

doing *refreshed his spirit and theirs*, ver. 17, 18. *i. e.* They gave him a more perfect account of the state of the church by word of mouth, than he could acquire by their letter, and by that means quieted his mind much, and upon their return from him would quiet the minds of the Corinthians. Report had made their case much worse than it was in fact, and their letters had not explained it enough to give the apostle satisfaction; but he had been made more easy by converse with them. It was a very good office they did, by truly stating facts, and removing the ill opinion Paul had received by common fame. They came to him with a truly Christian intention to set the apostle right, and gave him as favourable sentiments of the church, as they could; as peace-makers. Note, It is a great refreshment to the spirit of a faithful minister, to hear better of a people by wise and good men of their own body, than by common report; to find himself misinformed concerning them; that matters are not as bad as they had been represented. It is a grief to him to hear ill of those he loves; it glads his heart to hear the report is false. And the greater value he has for those that give him this information, and the more he can depend upon their truth, the greater is his joy.

(2.) Upon this account of the men, he directs how they should carry it towards them, and (1.) He would have them acknowledged, ver. 18. *i. e.* owned and respected. They deserve it for their good offices. Those who serve the saints, those who consult the honour and good esteem of the churches, and are concerned to wipe off reproaches from them, and take off from the ill opinion fame had propagated, are to be valued, and esteemed, and loved. They who discover so good a spirit cannot easily be over-valued. (2.) He advises, that they should *submit themselves to such, and to all who helped with the apostles, and laboured*, ver. 16. This is not to be understood of subjection to proper superiors, but of a voluntary acknowledgment of their worth. They were persons to whom they owed peculiar respect, and whom they should have in veneration. Note, It is a venerable character they bear, who serve the saints, and labour hard to help the success of the gospel; who countenance and encourage the faithful ministers of Christ, and endeavour to promote their usefulness. Such should be had in honourable esteem.

19. The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house. 20. All the brethren greet you. Greet ye one another with an holy kiss. 21. The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand. 22. If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema, maran-atha. 23. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. 24. My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.

The apostle closes his epistle, (1.) With salutations to the church of Corinth, (1.) From those of Asia, from Priscilla and Aquila, (who seem to have been at this time inhabitants of Ephesus, *vid. Acts xviii. 26.*) *with the church in their house*, ver. 19. and from all the brethren, ver. 20. *viz.* at Ephesus, where it is highly probable at least Paul then was. All these saluted the church at Corinth, by Paul. Note, Christianity does by no means destroy civility and good manners. Paul could find room in an epistle treating of very important matters, to send the salutations of friends. Religion should promote a courteous and obliging temper towards all. They misrepresent and reproach it, who would take any encouragement from it, to be sour and morose. Some of these, *salute them much in the Lord*. Note, Christian salutations are not empty compliments. They carry in them real expression of good-will, and are attended with hearty recommendations to the divine grace and blessing. They who salute in the Lord, with their brethren all good from the Lord, and breathe out their good wishes in fervent prayers. We read also of a church in a private family, ver. 19. It is very probable, that the family itself is called the church in their house. Note, Every Christian family should in some respects be a Christian church. In some cases (as for instance, were they cast away on a foreign shore, where there are no other Christians) they should be a church themselves if large enough, and live in the use of all ordinances; but in common cases they should live under the direction of Christian rules; and daily offer up Christian worship. Wherever two or three are gathered together, and Christ is amongst them, there is a church. (2.) To these salutations he subjoins, (1.) An advice, that *they should greet one another with an holy kiss*, ver. 20. or with sincere good-will. A tacit reproof of their feuds and factions. When the churches of Asia, and the Christian brethren so remote, did so heartily salute them in the Lord, and own and love them as brethren, and expressed so much good-will to them, it would be a shame for them not to own and love one another as brethren. Note, The love of the brethren should be a powerful incentive to mutual love. When the other churches of Christ love us all, we are very culpable, if we do not love one another. (2.) He subjoins his own salutation. *The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand*, ver. 21. His amanuensis, it is reasonable to think, wrote the rest of his epistle from his mouth, but at the close it was fit himself should sign it, that they might know it

it to be genuine; and therefore it is added, *2 Thes. iii. 17. Which is my token in every epistle*; the mark of its being genuine: so he wrote in every epistle which he did not wholly pen, as he did that to the Galatians, *Gal. vi. 11.* Note, Those churches to whom apostolical letters were sent, were duly certified of their being authentick and divine. Nor would Paul be behind the rest of the brethren, in respect to the Corinthians, and therefore after he has given their salutations, he adds his own.

(2.) With a very solemn warning to them. *If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema, maran-atha*, ver. 22. We sometimes need words of threatening, that we may fear. *Blessed is he*, saith the wise man, *who feareth alway.* Holy fear is a very good friend, both to holy faith and holy living. And how much reason have all Christians to fear falling under this doom! *If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema, maran-atha.* Where observe, (1.) *The person described*, who is liable to this doom. *He that loveth not the Lord Jesus Christ.* A *μεισος*, as some think: He that blasphemes Christ, disowns his doctrine, flights and contemns his institutions, or through pride of human knowledge and learning despises his revelations. It stands here as a warning to the Corinthians, and a rebuke of their criminal behaviour. It is an admonition to them not to be led away from the simplicity of the gospel, or those principles of it which were the great motives to purity of life, by pretenders to science, by the wisdom of the world, which would call their religion folly, and its most important doctrines absurd and ridiculous. Those men had a spite at Christ, and if the Corinthians gave ear to their seducing speeches, they were in danger of apostatizing from him. Against this he gives them here a very solemn caution. Do not give into such a conduct, if you would escape the severest vengeance. Note, Professed Christians will, by contempt of Christ, and revolt from him, bring upon themselves the most dreadful destruction. Some understand the words as they lie, in their plain and obvious meaning, for such as are without holy and sincere affection for the Lord Jesus Christ. Many who have his name much in their mouths, have no true love to him in their hearts, *will not have him to rule over them*, Luke xix. 27. No, not though they have very towering hopes of being saved by him. And none love him in truth, that do not love his laws, and *keep his commandments.* Note, There are many Christians in name, that do not love Christ Jesus the Lord in sincerity. But can any thing be more criminal or provoking! What, not love the most glorious lover in the world! Him *who loved us, and gave himself for us!* Who shed his blood for us, to testify his love to us, and that after heinous wrong and provocation! What had we a power of loving for, if we are unmoved with such love as this, and without affection to such a Saviour. But, (2.) We have here their doom. *Let him be anathema, maran-atha*, lie under the heaviest and most dreadful curse. Let him be separated from the people of God, from the favour of God, and delivered up to his final, irrevocable and inexorable vengeance. *Maran-atha* is a Syriack phrase, and signifies *the Lord cometh.* That very Lord

whom they do not love, to whom they are inwardly and really disaffected, whatever outward profession they make, he is coming to *execute judgment.* And to be exposed to his wrath, to be divided to his left hand, to be condemned by him, how dreadful! If he will destroy, who can save? Those who fall under his condemning sentence must perish, and that for ever. Note, They who love not the Lord Jesus Christ, must perish without remedy. *The wrath of God abides on every one who believes not on the Son*, John iii. 36. And true faith in Christ will evermore be productive of sincere love to him. They who love him not, cannot be believers in him.

(3.) The apostle closes all with his good wishes for them, and expressions of good-will to them. (1.) With his good wishes. *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you*, ver. 23. As much as if he had said, Though I warn you against falling under his displeasure, I heartily wish you an interest in his dearest love, and his eternal favour. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ comprehends in it all that is good, for time or eternity. To wish our friends may have this grace with them, is wishing them the utmost good. And this we should wish all our friends and brethren in Christ. We can wish them nothing more, and we should wish them nothing less. We should heartily pray, that they may value, and seek, and obtain, and secure the grace and good-will of their Lord and Judge. Note, The most solemn warnings are the result of the tenderest affection, and the greatest good-will. We may tell our brethren and friends with great plainness and *pathos*, that if they love not the Lord Jesus Christ they must perish, whilst we heartily wish the grace of Christ may be with them. Nay, we may give them this warning, that they may prize and lay hold of this grace. Note also, How much true Christianity enlarges our hearts. It makes us wish those whom we love, the blessings of both worlds. For this is implied in wishing the grace of Christ to be with them. And therefore it is no wonder, (2.) That the apostle should close all with the declaration of his love to them in Christ Jesus. *My love be with you all, in Christ Jesus*, Amen, ver. 24. He had dealt very plainly with them in this epistle, and told them of their faults with just severity, but to shew that he was not transported with passion, he parts with them in love, makes solemn profession of his love to them, nay to them all in *Christ Jesus*, i. e. for Christ's sake. He tells them, that his heart was with them, that he truly loved them, but lest this after all should be deemed flattery and insinuation, he adds, that his affection was the result of his religion, and would be guided by the rules of it. His heart would be with them, and he would bear them dear affection, as long as their hearts were with Christ, and they bore true affection to his cause and interest. Note, We should be cordial lovers of all that are in Christ, and that love him in sincerity. Not but we should love all men, and wish them well, and do them what good is in our power; but they must have our dearest affection, who are dear to Christ, and lovers of him. May our love *be with all them that are in Christ Jesus.* Amen.

A N

E X P O S I T I O N

O F T H E

Second Epistle of St. Paul to the CORINTHIANS,

W I T H

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS.

In his former epistle the apostle had signified his intentions of coming to Corinth as he passed through Macedonia, chap. xvi. 6. but being providentially hindered for some time, he writeth this second epistle to them about a year after the former; and there seem to be these two great urgent occasions. 1. The case of the incestuous person that lay under censure, required that with all speed he should be restored and received again into communion. This therefore he giveth directions about, chap. ii. and afterwards, chap. vii. he

declareth the satisfaction he had upon the intelligence he received of their good behaviour in that affair. 2. There was a contribution now making for the poor saints at Jerusalem, which he exhorteth the Corinthians to join in, chap. viii, and ix.

There are divers other things very observable in this epistle, e. g. (1.) The account the apostle giveth of his labours and success in preaching the gospel in several places, chap. ii. (2.) The comparison he maketh between the Old and New Testament dispensation, chap. iii. (3.) The manifold sufferings that he and his fellow-labourers met with, and the motives and encouragements for their diligence and patience, chap. iv, v. (4.) The caution he giveth the Corinthians against mingling themselves with unbelievers, chap. vi. (5.) The way and manner in which he justifieth himself and his apostleship from the opprobrious insinuations and accusations of false teachers, that endeavoured to ruin his reputation at Corinth, chap. x, xi, xii. and throughout the whole epistle.

CHAP. I.

After the introduction, ver. 1, 2. the apostle begins with the narrative of his troubles and God's goodness which he had met with in Asia, by way of thanksgiving to God, ver. 3—6. and for the edification of the Corinthians, ver. 7—11. Then he attesteth his and his fellow-labourers integrity, ver. 12, 13, 14. and afterwards vindicateth himself from the imputation of levity and inconslancy, ver. 15—24.

1. **P**AUL an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia : 2. Grace be to you, and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is the introduction to this epistle, in which we have,

(1.) The inscription; and therein, 1. The person from whom it was sent, viz. Paul; who calleth himself an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God. The apostleship itself was ordained by Jesus Christ according to the will of God; and Paul was called to it by Jesus Christ according to the will of God. He joineth Timotheus with himself in writing this epistle; not because he needeth his assistance, but that out of the mouth of two witnesses the word might be established: and his dignifying Timothy with the title of brother, (either in the common faith, or in the work of the ministry) sheweth the humility of this great apostle, and his desire to recommend Timothy, though he was then a young man, to the esteem of the Corinthians, and give him a reputation among the churches. 2. The persons to whom this epistle was sent, viz. The church of God at Corinth; and not only to them, but also to all the saints in all Achaia, i. e. to all the Christians who lived in the region round about. Note, In Christ Jesus no distinction is made between the inhabitants of city or country. All Achaia stands upon a level in his account.

(2.) The salutation, or apostolical benediction; which is the same as in his former epistle; and therein the apostle desireth the two great and comprehensive blessings, grace and peace, for those Corinthians. These two benefits are fitly joined together, because there is no good and lasting peace, without true grace, and both of them do come from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the procurer and dispenser of these benefits to fallen man, and is prayed to as God.

3. Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; 4. Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we our selves are comforted of God. 5. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. 6. And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.

After the foregoing preface, the apostle begins,

First, With the narrative of God's goodness to him and his fellow-labourers in their manifold tribulations; which he speaketh of,

[1.] By way of thanksgiving to God, and to advance the divine glory, ver. 3—6. And it is fit that in all things, and in the first place, God be glorified. Observe,

(1.) The object of the apostle's thanksgiving, to whom he offereth up blessing and praise, namely the blessed God, who only is to be praised; whom he describeth by several glorious and amiable titles. 1. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ:

ὁ Θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ τοῦ Κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. God is the Father of Christ's divine nature by eternal generation; of his human nature by miraculous conception in the womb of the virgin; and of Christ, as God-man, and our Redeemer, by covenant-relation; and in and through him as Mediator, our God, and our Father, John xx. 17. In the Old Testament we often meet with this title, The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, to denote God's covenant-relation to them and their seed; and in the New Testament God is stiled the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to denote his covenant-relation to the Mediator and his spiritual seed, Gal. iii. 16. 2. The Father of mercies. There are a multitude of tender mercies in God essentially, and all mercies are from God originally: Mercy is his genuine offspring, and his delight; he delighteth in mercy, Mich. vii. 18. 3. The God of all comfort. From him proceedeth the COMFORTER, John xv. 26. He giveth the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts, ver. 20. All our comforts come from God, and our sweetest comforts are in him.

(2.) The reasons of the apostle's thanksgiving, which are these. 1. The benefits that he himself and his companions had received from God. For God had comforted them in all their tribulation, ver. 4. In the world they had trouble, but in Christ they had peace. The apostles met with many tribulations, but they found comfort in them all. Their sufferings (which are called the sufferings of Christ, ver. 5. because Christ sympathized with his members when suffering for his sake) did abound, but their consolation by Christ did abound also. Note, 1. Then are we qualified to receive the comfort of God's mercies, when we set our selves to give him the glory of them. 2. Then we speak best of God and his goodness, when we speak from our own experience, and in telling others, tell God also, what he hath done for our souls.

2. The advantage which others might receive. For God intended that they should be able to comfort others in trouble, ver. 4. by communicating to them their experiences of the divine goodness and mercy; and the sufferings of good men have a tendency to this good end; ver. 6. when they are endured with faith and patience. Note, 1. What favours God bestoweth on us are intended not only to make us cheerful ourselves, but also that we may be useful to others. 2. If we do imitate the faith and patience of good men in their afflictions, we may hope to partake of their consolations here, and their salvation hereafter.

7. And our hope of you is steadfast, knowing that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation. 8. For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: 9. But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead. 10. Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us: 11. You also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons, thanks may be given by many on our behalf.

In these verses the apostle speaketh,

[2.] For the encouragement and edification of the Corinthians. And tells them, ver. 7. of his persuasion or steadfast hope, that they should receive benefit by the troubles he and his companions in labour and travel had met with: that their faith should not be weakened, but their consolations increased. In order to this, he tells them,

(1.) What their sufferings had been, ver. 8. We would not have you ignorant of our trouble. It was convenient for the churches to know what were the sufferings of their ministers. It is not certain what particular troubles in Asia are here referred to; whether the tumult raised by Demetrius at Ephesus, mentioned Acts xix. or the fight with beasts at Ephesus, mentioned in the former epistle, chap. xv. or some other trouble, for the apostle was

was in *deaths often*. This however is evident, they were great tribulations. They were pushed out of measure, to a very extraordinary degree, above the common strength of men, or of ordinary Christians to bear up under them, insomuch that they *despaired even of life*, ver. 8. and thought they should have been killed, or have fainted away, and expired.

(2.) What they did in their distress. *They trusted in God*. And therefore they were brought to that extremity, that they should not trust in themselves, but in God, ver. 9. Note, God often bringeth his people into great straits, that they may apprehend their own insufficiency to help themselves, and might be induced to place their trust and hope in his all-sufficiency. Our extremity is God's opportunity. *In the mount will the Lord be seen*; and we may safely trust in God which raiseth the dead, ver. 9. God's raising the dead is a proof of his almighty power: He that can do that, can do any thing, can do all things, and is worthy to be trusted in at all times. Abraham's faith fastened upon this instance of the divine power. *He believeth God who quickeneth the dead*, Rom. iv. 17. If we should be brought so low as to despair even of life, yet we may then trust in God, who can bring back not only from the gates, but from the jaws of death.

(3.) What the deliverance was they had obtained, and this was seasonable and continued. Their hope and trust was not in vain, nor shall any that trust in him, be ashamed. God had delivered them, and did still deliver them, ver. 10. *Having obtained help of God, they continued to that day*, Acts xxvi. 22.

(4.) What use they made of this deliverance. *We trust that he will yet deliver us*, ver. 10. That God will deliver to the end, and preserve to his heavenly kingdom. Note, Past experiences are great encouragements to faith and hope, and they lay great obligations to trust in God for time to come. We reproach our experiences if we distrust God in future straits, who hath delivered us in former troubles. David, even when a young man, and had but a small stock of experiences, argued after this manner the apostle here argueth, 1 Sam. xvii. 37.

(5.) What was desired of the Corinthians upon this account, viz. *That they would help together by prayer for them*, ver. 11. by social prayer, agreeing and joining together in prayer on their behalf. Note, Our trusting in God must not supersede the use of any proper and appointed means; and prayer is one of those means. We should pray for ourselves, and for one another. The apostle had himself a great interest in the throne of grace, yet he desired the help of others prayers. And if we thus help one another by our prayers, we may hope for an occasion of giving thanks by many for answer of prayer. And it is our duty not only to help one another with prayer, but in praise and thanksgiving, and thereby to make suitable returns for benefits received.

12. For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-wards. 13. For we write none other things unto you, than what you read or acknowledge, and I trust you shall acknowledge even to the end. 14. As also you have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus.

Secondly, The apostle in these verses attests their integrity by the sincerity of their conversation. This he doth not in a way of boasting and vain-glory, but as one good reason the more comfortably to trust in God, and their desiring the help of prayer, Heb. xiii. 18. and for the necessary vindication of himself from the aspersions of some persons at Corinth, who reproached his person, and questioned his apostleship. And here consider,

(1.) He appealed to the testimony of conscience with rejoicing, ver. 12. In which observe,

1. The witness appealed to, namely conscience; which is instead of a thousand witnesses. This is God's deputy in the soul, and the voice of conscience is the voice of God. They rejoiced in the testimony of conscience, when their enemies reproached them, and were enraged against them. Note, The testimony of conscience for us, if that be right and upon good grounds, will be matter of rejoicing at all times, and in all conditions.

2. The testimony this witness gave. And here take notice, conscience witnessed, (1.) Concerning their conversation, i. e. their constant course and tenour of life: and by that we may judge of ourselves, and not by this or that single act. (2.) Concerning the nature or manner of their conversation; that it was in simplicity and godly sincerity. This blessed apostle was a true Israelite, a man of plain-dealing, you might know where to have him: He was not a man that seemed to be one thing, and was another, but a man of sincerity. (3.) Concerning the principle they acted from in all their conversation, both in the world, and towards these Corinthians; and that was not fleshly wisdom, or carnal politicks, and worldly views, but it was the grace of God, a vital gracious principle in their heart, that cometh from God,

and tendeth to God. And then will our conversation be well ordered, when we live and act under the influence and command of such a gracious principle in the heart.

(2.) He appealeth to the knowledge of the Corinthians with hope and confidence, ver. 13, 14.

Their conversation did in part fall under the observation of the Corinthians, and these knew how they behaved themselves, how holily, and justly, and unblameably; they never found any thing in them unbecoming an honest man. This they had acknowledged in part already, and he doubted not but they would still do so to the end, i. e. That they should never have any good reason to think or say otherwise of him, but that he was an honest man. And so there would be mutual rejoicing in one another. *We are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus*. Note, It is happy when ministers and people do rejoice in each other here; and this joy will be complete in that day when the great Shepherd of the sheep shall appear.

15. And in this confidence I was minded to come unto you before, that you might have a second benefit: 16. And to pass by you into Macedonia, and to come again out of Macedonia unto you, and of you to be brought on my way toward Judea. 17. When I therefore was thus minded did I use lightness? or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yea, yea, and nay, nay? 18. But as God is true, our word toward you, was not yea and nay. 19. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in him was yea. 20. For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen, unto the glory of God by us. 21. Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God: 22. Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts. 23. Moreover, I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth. 24. Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand.

Thirdly, The apostle vindicateth himself from the imputation of levity and inconstancy, in that he did not hold his purpose of coming to them at Corinth. His adversaries there sought all occasions to blemish his character, and reflect upon his conduct; and it seemed they took hold of this handle to reproach his person and discredit his ministry. Now for his justification,

(1.) He avers the sincerity of his intention, ver. 15, 16, 17. and he doth this in confidence of their good opinion of him, and that they would believe him, when he assured them he was minded, or did really intend to come to them; and that with design, not that he might receive, but that they might receive a second benefit, i. e. some further advantage by his ministry. He tells them he had not herein used lightness, ver. 17. (that as he aimed not at any secular advantage to himself, for his purpose was not according to the flesh, i. e. with carnal views and aims; so) it was not a rash and inconsiderate resolution he had taken up, for he had laid his measures thus of passing by them to Macedonia, and coming again to them from Macedonia in his way to Judea, ver. 16. and therefore they might conclude it was for some weighty reasons that he had altered his purpose; and that with him there was not yea, yea, and nay, nay, ver. 17. i. e. He was not to be accused of levity and inconstancy, or a contradiction between his words and intentions. Note, Good men should be careful to preserve the reputation of sincerity and constancy: they should not resolve but upon mature deliberation, and they will not change their resolves but for weighty reasons.

(2.) He would not have the Corinthians to infer that his gospel was false or uncertain, or that it was contradictory in itself, or unto truth, ver. 18, 19. For if it had been so, that he had been fickle in his purposes, or even false in the promises he made of coming to them, (which he was not justly to be accused of, and so some understand this expression, ver. 18. *Our word toward you was not yea and nay*) yet it would not follow that the gospel preached not only by him, but also by others in full agreement with him, was either false or doubtful. For God is true. And the Son of God, Jesus Christ, is true. The true God and eternal life. Jesus Christ whom the apostle preached, is not yea and nay, but in him was yea, ver. 19. Nothing but infallible truth. And the promises of God in Christ are not yea and nay, but yea and amen, ver. 20. There is an inviolable constancy and unquestionable sincerity and certainty in all the parts of the gospel of Christ. If in the promises that the ministers of the gospel do make as common men, and about their own affairs, they see cause sometimes to vary from them, yet the promises of the gospel covenant which they preach, stand firm and inviolable. Bad men are false; good men are fickle; but God is true, neither fickle nor false.

The apostle having mentioned the stability of the divine promises, maketh a digression to illustrate this great and sweet truth, That all the promises of God are yea and amen. For,

1. They are the promises of the God of truth, *ver. 20.* of him *that cannot lye*, whose truth as well as mercy endureth for ever.

2. They are made in Christ Jesus, *ver. 20.* the *amen*, the true and faithful witness; he hath purchased and ratified the covenant of promises, and is the *surety of the covenant*, Heb. vii. 22.

3. They are confirmed by the holy Spirit. He doth *establiſh* Christians in the faith of the gospel; he hath *anointed* them with his sanctifying grace, which in scripture is often compared to oil; he hath *sealed* them, for their security and confirmation; and he is given *as an earnest in their hearts*, *ver. 21, 22.* An earnest doth secure the promise, and is part of the payment. The illumination of the Spirit is an earnest of everlasting light; the quickening of the Spirit is an earnest of everlasting life; and the comforts of the Spirit are an earnest of everlasting joy. Note, The veracity of God, the mediation of Christ, and the operation of the Spirit, are all engaged that the promises shall be sure to all the seed, and the accomplishment of them shall be to the *glory of God*, *ver. 20.* for the glory of his rich and sovereign grace, and never-failing truth and faithfulness.

(3.) The apostle giveth a good reason why he did not come to Corinth as was expected, *ver. 23.* It was that he might *spare* them. They ought therefore to own his kindness and tenderness. He knew there were things amiss among them, and such as deserved censure, but was desirous to shew tenderness. He assureth them this was the true reason, after this very solemn manner, *I call God for a record upon my soul*; a way of speaking not justifiable where used in trivial matters. But this was very justifiable in the apostle for his necessary vindication, and for the credit and usefulness of his ministry, which was struck at by his opposers. He addeth, to prevent mistakes, That he did not pretend to *any dominion over their faith*, *ver. 24.* Christ only is the Lord of our faith, he is the *author and finisher of our faith*, Heb. xii. 2. He doth reveal to us what we must believe. Paul and Apollos, and the rest of the apostles, were *but ministers by whom they believed*, 1 Cor. iii. 5. and so the *helpers of their joy*, even the joy of faith. For *by faith we stand firm*, and live safely and comfortably. Our strength and ability is *owing* to faith, and our comfort and joy must *flow* from faith.

CHAP. II.

In this chapter the apostle proceedeth in the account of the reasons why he did not come to Corinth, *ver. 1—4.* Then he writeth concerning the incestuous person that lay under censure; and giveth direction for the restoring him, together with the reasons for their so doing, *ver. 5—11.* And afterwards informeth them of his labours and success in preaching the gospel in several places, *ver. 12—17.*

1. **B**UT I determined this with my self, that I would not come again to you in heaviness. 2. For if I make you sorry, who is he then that maketh me glad, but the same which is made sorry by me? 3. And I wrote this same unto you, lest when I came, I should have sorrow from them of whom I ought to rejoice, having confidence in you all, that my joy is the joy of you all. 4. For out of much affliction and anguish of heart, I wrote unto you with many tears; not that you should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you.

In these verses,

(1.) The apostle proceedeth in giving an account of the reason why he did not come to Corinth as was expected, namely, because he was unwilling to grieve them, or be grieved by them, *ver. 1, 2.* He hath determined not to come to them in heaviness; which yet he should have done had he came and found scandal among them not duly animadverted upon: this would have been cause of grief both to him and them; for their sorrow or joy at meeting would have been mutual. If he had made them sorry, that would have been a sorrow to himself, for there would have been none to have made him glad. But his desire was to have a cheerful meeting with them, and not to have it imbittered by any unhappy occasion of disagreeing.

(2.) He tells them it was to the same intent that he wrote his former epistle, *ver. 3, 4.* viz. 1. That he might not have sorrow from them, of whom he ought to rejoice; and that he had written to them in confidence of their doing what was requisite in order to their benefit and his comfort. The particular thing referred to, as appeareth by the following verses, was the case of the incestuous person about whom he had written in the first epistle, chap. v. Nor was the apostle disappointed in his expectation, 2. He

assureth them that he did not design to grieve them, but to testify his love to them, and that he wrote to them with much *anguish and affliction* in his own heart, and with great affection to them. He had *written with tears*, that they might know his abundant love to them. Note, 1. That even in reproofs, admonitions, and acts of discipline, faithful ministers shew their love. 2. That needful censures, and the exercise of church-discipline towards offenders, is a grief to tender-spirited ministers, and are administered with regret.

5. But if any have caused grief, he hath not grieved me, but in part: that I may not overcharge you all. 6. Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many. 7. So that contrariwise, ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. 8. Wherefore I beseech you, that ye would confirm your love towards him. 9. For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things. 10. To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also: for if I forgave any thing to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it, in the person of Christ; 11. Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.

In these verses the apostle treateth concerning the incestuous person that had been excommunicated, which seemeth to be one principal cause of his writing this epistle.

Here observe,

(1.) He tells them the crime of that person had grieved him in part; and that he was grieved also with a part of them, who, notwithstanding this scandal had been found among them, were *puffed up, and had not mourned*, Eph. v. 2. However he was unwilling to lay too heavy a charge upon the whole church, especially seeing they had cleared themselves in that matter, by observing the directions he had formerly given them.

(2.) He tells them that the punishment which had been inflicted upon this offender, was sufficient, *ver. 6.* The desired effect was obtained, for the man was humbled, and they had shewn the proof of their obedience to his directions.

(3.) He therefore *directeth* them, with all speed, to restore the excommunicated person, or to receive him again to their communion, *ver. 7, 8.* This is expressed several ways; he beseecheth them to *forgive* him, *i. e.* to release him from church-censures, for they could not remit the guilt or offence against God; and also to *comfort* him; for in many cases the comfort of penitents dependeth not only upon their reconciliation with God, but with men also, whom they have scandalized, or injured. They must also *confirm their love* to him, *i. e.* they should shew their reproofs and censures did proceed from love to his person, as well as hatred to his sin; and that their design was to reform, not to ruin him. Or thus: If his fall had weakened their love to him, that they could not take that satisfaction in him as formerly; yet now that he was recovered by repentance, they must renew and confirm their love to him.

(4.) He useth several weighty arguments to persuade them to do thus, *e. g.* 1. The case of the penitent called for this; for he was in danger of being *swallowed up with overmuch sorrow*, *ver. 7.* He was so sensible of his fault, and so much afflicted under his punishment, that he was in danger of falling into despair; and when sorrow is excessive, it doth hurt; even sorrow for sin is too great, when it unfits for other duties, and driveth men to despair. 2. They had *shewed obedience* to his directions in passing a censure upon him, and now he would have them comply with his desire to restore him, *ver. 9.* 3. He mentions his readiness to forgive this penitent, and concur with them in this matter; *To whom ye forgive, I forgive also*, *ver. 10. i. e.* I will readily concur with you in forgiving him. And this he would do for *their sakes*, for love to them, and for their advantage; and for *Christ's sake*, or in his name, as his apostle, and in conformity to his doctrine and example, which is so full of kindness and tender mercy towards all them that truly repent. 4. He giveth another weighty reason, *ver. 11.* Lest Satan get an advantage against us. Not only was there danger lest Satan should get an advantage of the penitent by driving him to despair; but against the churches also, and the apostles or ministers of Christ, by representing them as too rigid and severe, and so frighten people from coming among them.

In this, as in other things, *wisdom is profitable to direct*, so to manage according as the case may be, that the ministry may not be blamed for indulging sin on the one hand, or for too great severity towards sinners on the other hand. Note, Satan is a *subtle enemy*, and useth many stratagems to deceive us; and we should not be ignorant of his devices: And he is a *watchful* adversary, ready to take all advantages against us; and we should be very cautious lest we give him any occasion so to do.

12. Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the

the Lord. 13. I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother : but taking my leave of them, I went from thence into Macedonia. 14. Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the favour of his knowledge by us in every place. 15. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish. 16. To the one we are the savour of death unto death ; and to the other the savour of life unto life : and who is sufficient for these things ? 17. For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God : but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.

After these directions concerning the excommunicated person, the apostle maketh a long digression to give the Corinthians an account of his travels and labours for the furtherance of the gospel, and what success he had had therein ; declaring at the same time how much he was concerned for them in their affairs ; how he *had no rest in his spirit*, when he found not Titus at Troas, ver. 13. as he did expect, from whom he hoped to have understood more perfectly how it fared with them. And we find afterwards, chap. vii. ver. 5, 6, 7. that when the apostle was come into Macedonia, he was comforted by the coming of Titus, and the information he gave him concerning them. So that we may look upon all that we read from this second chapter, ver. 12. to chap. vii. ver. 5. as a kind of parenthesis. Observe here,

(1.) Paul's unwearied labour and diligence in his work, ver. 12, 13. He travelled from place to place to preach the gospel. He went to Troas from Philippi by sea, Acts xx. 6. from thence he went to Macedonia ; so that he was prevented from passing by Corinth, as he designed, chap. i. 16. But though he was prevented in his design, as to the place of working, yet he was unwearied in his work.

(2.) His success in his work. A great door was opened to him of the Lord, ver. 12. He had a great deal of work to do wherever he came, and had good success in his work ; for God made manifest the favour of his knowledge by him in every place where he came. He had an opportunity to open the door of his mouth freely, and God opened the hearts of his hearers, as the heart of Lydia, Acts xvi. 14. and the apostle speaketh of this as a matter of thankfulness to God, and of rejoicing to his soul. Thanks be to God, saith he, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ. Note, 1. A believer's triumphs are all in Christ. In ourselves we are weak, and have neither joy nor victory, but in Christ we may rejoice and triumph. 2. True believers have constant cause of triumph in Christ, for they are more than conquerors through him that hath loved them, Rom. viii. 37. 3. God causeth them to triumph in Christ. It is God that hath given us matter for triumph, and hearts to triumph. To him therefore be the praise and glory of all. 4. The good success of the gospel is a good reason for a Christian's joy and rejoicing.

(3.) The comfort that the apostle and his companions in labour did find, when the gospel was not successful to the salvation of some that heard it, ver. 15, 16, 17. Here observe,

1. The different success of the gospel, and its different effects upon several sorts of persons to whom it is preached. The success is different, for some are saved by it, whilst others perish under it. Nor is this to be wondered at, considering the different effects the gospel hath. For, 1. Unto some it is a savour of death unto death. Those that are willingly ignorant, and wilfully obstinate, do disrelish the gospel, as men dislike an ill savour, and therefore they are blinded and hardened by it. It stirs up their corruptions, and exasperateth their spirits. They reject the gospel to their ruin, even to spiritual and eternal death. 2. Unto others the gospel is a savour of life unto life. To humble and gracious souls the preaching of the word is most delightful and profitable. As it is sweeter than honey to the taste, so it is more grateful than the most precious odours to the senses, and much more profitable ; for as it quickened them at first when they were dead in trespasses and sins, so it maketh them more lively, and will end in eternal life.

2. The awful impressions this matter made upon the mind of the apostle, and should also make upon our spirits. Who is sufficient for these things ? ver. 16. *Τίς ικανός* ; who is worthy to be employed in such weighty work, a work of such vast importance, because of so great consequence ? Who is able to perform such a difficult work, that requireth so much skill and industry ? The work is great, and our strength is small ; yea, of ourselves we have no strength at all, All our sufficiency is of God. Note, If men did seriously consider what great things depend upon the preaching of the gospel, and how difficult the work of the ministry is, they would be very cautious how they enter upon it, and very careful to perform it well.

3. The comfort which the apostle had under this serious consideration. 1. Because faithful ministers shall be accepted of God, whatever their success be. We are, if faithful, unto God a sweet savour of Christ, ver. 15. in them that are saved, and in them also that perish. God will accept of sincere intentions, and honest

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endeavours, though with many they are not successful : Ministers shall be accepted, and recompensed not according to their success, but according to their fidelity. *Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord*, Isa. xlix. 5. 2. Because his conscience witnessed to his faithfulness, ver. 17. Though many did corrupt the word of God, ver. 17. yet the apostle's conscience witnessed to his fidelity. He did not mix his own notions with the doctrines and institutions of Christ ; he durst not add to, nor diminish from, the word of God ; he was faithful in dispensing the gospel, as he received it from the Lord, and had no secular turn to serve ; his aim was to approve himself to God, remembering his eye was always upon him, he therefore spake and acted always as in the sight of God, and therefore in sincerity. Note, What we do in religion is not of God, doth not come from God, will not reach to God, unless it be done in sincerity, as in the sight of God.

CHAP. III.

The apostle maketh an apology for his seeming to commend himself, and is careful not to assume too much to himself, but to ascribe all praise unto God, ver. 1—5. He then runs a comparison between the Old Testament and the New, and sheweth the excellency of the latter above the former, ver. 6—11. From whence he infers what is the duty of gospel-ministers, and the advantage of those who live under the gospel, above those that lived under the law, ver. 12, ad fin.

1. DO we begin again to commend ourselves ? or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you ? 2. Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men : 3. For as much as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God ; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart. 4. And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward : 5. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves : but our sufficiency is of God.

In these verses,

(1.) The apostle maketh an apology for his seeming to commend himself. He thought it convenient to protest his sincerity to them, because there were some at Corinth who endeavoured to blast his reputation ; yet he was not desirous of vain-glory. And he tells them,

1. They neither needed nor desired any verbal commendation to them, nor letters testimonial from them, as some others did, meaning the false apostles or teachers, ver. 1. Their ministry among them had, without controversy, been truly great and honourable, how little soever their persons were in reality, or how contemptible soever some would have them thought to be.

2. The Corinthians themselves were their real commendation, and a good testimonial for them, that God was with them of a truth, that they were sent of God. *Ye are our epistle*, ver. 2. This was the testimonial they most delighted in, and what was most dear to them, they were written in their hearts : And this they could appeal to upon occasion, for it was or might be known and read of all men. Note, There is nothing more delightful to faithful ministers, nor more to their commendation, than the success of their ministry evidenced in the hearts and lives of them among whom they labour.

(2.) The apostle is careful not to assume too much to himself, but to ascribe all the praise to God. Therefore,

1. He saith they were the epistle of Christ, ver. 3. The apostle and others were but instruments, Christ was the author of all the good that was in them. The law of Christ was written in their hearts, and the love of Christ shed abroad in their hearts. This epistle was not written with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God ; nor was it written in tables of stone, as the law of God given to Moses, but on the heart ; and that heart not a stony one, but a heart of flesh, upon the fleshy (not fleshly, as fleshliness denoteth sensuality) tables of the heart, i. e. upon hearts that are softened and renewed by divine grace, according to that gracious promise, *I will take away the stony heart, and I will give you an heart of flesh*, Ezek. xxxvi. 26. This was the good hope the apostle had concerning these Corinthians, ver. 4. that their hearts were like the ark of the covenant, containing the tables of the law and the gospel, written with the finger, i. e. by the Spirit of the living God.

2. He utterly disclaimeth the taking any praise to themselves, and ascribeth all the glory to God, *We are not sufficient of ourselves*, ver. 5. We could never have made such good impressions on your hearts, nor upon our own : Such is our weakness and inability, that we cannot, of ourselves, think a good thought, much less raise any good thoughts or affections in other men. All

our sufficiency is of God; to him therefore is owing all the praise and glory of that good which is done, and from him we must receive grace and strength to do more. This is true concerning ministers and all Christians, the best are no more than what the grace of God maketh them: Our hands are not sufficient for us, but our sufficiency is of God; and his grace is sufficient for us, to furnish us for every good word and work.

6. Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament, not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. 7. But if the ministration of death written *and* ingraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses, for the glory of his countenance, which *glory* was to be done away; 8. How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? 9. For if the ministration of condemnation *be* glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. 10. For even that which was made glorious, had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. 11. For if that which is done away *was* glorious, much more that which remaineth *is* glorious.

Here the apostle runs a comparison between the Old Testament and the New, the law of Moses and the gospel of Jesus Christ; and valueth himself and his fellow-labourers by this, that *they were able ministers of the New Testament*, that God had made them so, *ver. 6.* And this he doth in answer to the accusations of false teachers, who magnify greatly the law of Moses.

(1.) He distinguisheth between the *letter* and the *spirit*, even of the New Testament, *ver. 6.* And as able ministers of the New Testament, they were ministers not merely of the *letter*, to read the written word, or to preach the letter of the gospel only, but they were ministers of the *spirit* also, *i. e.* The Spirit of God did accompany their ministrations. The *letter killeth*, this the letter of the law doth, for that is the ministration of death; and if we rest only in the letter of the gospel, we shall be never the better for so doing, for even that will be a *savour of death unto death*: but the *spirit* of the gospel, going along with the *ministry* of the gospel, giveth life spiritual, and life eternal.

(2.) He sheweth the difference between the Old Testament and the New, and the excellency of the gospel above the law. For,

1. The Old Testament dispensation was the *ministration of death*, *ver. 7.* Whereas that of the New Testament is the *ministration of life*. The law discovered sin, and the wrath and curse of God, that shewed us a God *above* us, and a God *against* us; but the gospel discovereth grace and *Emmanuel*, God *with* us. Upon this account the gospel is more glorious than the law, and yet that had a glory in it, witness the shining of Moses's face, an indication thereof, when he came down from the mount, with the tables in his hand, that reflected rays of brightness upon his countenance.

2. The law was the *ministration of condemnation*, for that condemned and cursed every one that *continued not in all things written therein to do them*; but the gospel is the *ministration of righteousness*: Therein the righteousness of God by faith is revealed: This sheweth us the just shall live by his faith: This revealeth the grace and mercy of God through Jesus Christ, for the obtaining the remission of sins, and eternal life. The gospel therefore doth so much *exceed in glory*, that in a manner it doth eclipse the glory of the legal dispensation, *ver. 10.* As the shining of a burning lamp is lost, or not regarded, when the sun ariseth and goeth forth in his strength; so there was no glory in the Old Testament in comparison with that of the New.

3. The law is done away, but the gospel doth and shall *remain*, *ver. 11.* Not only did the glory of Moses's face go away, but the glory of Moses's law is done away also; yea, the law of Moses itself is now abolished, that dispensation was only to continue for a time, and then to vanish away: Whereas the gospel shall remain to the end of the world, and is always fresh and flourishing, and remaineth glorious.

12. Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech. 13. And not as Moses, *which* put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished. 14. But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away, in the reading of the old testament; which *veil* is done away in Christ. 15. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart. 16. Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away. 17. Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord *is*, there *is* liberty. 18. But we all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of

the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, *even* as by the Spirit of the Lord.

In these verses the apostle draweth two inferences from what he had said about the Old and New Testament.

(1.) Concerning the duty of the ministers of the gospel to use great *plainness* or clearness of speech: They ought not, like Moses, to put a veil upon their faces, or obscure and darken those things that should make plain. The gospel is a more clear dispensation than the law; the things of God are revealed in the New Testament, not in types and shadows; and ministers are much to blame, if they do not set spiritual things, and gospel-truth and grace, in the clearest light that is possible. Though the Israelites could not, yet we may look *stedfastly to the end* of what was commanded, but is now *abolished*. We may see the meaning of those types and shadows by the accomplishment, seeing the *veil is done away in Christ*; and he is come, who was the end of the law for righteousness to all them that believe, and whom Moses and all the prophets pointed to, and wrote of.

(2.) Concerning the privilege and advantage of those who enjoy the gospel, above those who lived under the law. For,

1. Those who lived under the legal dispensation had *their minds blinded*, *ver. 14.* and there was a *veil upon their hearts*, *ver. 15.* Thus it was formerly, and so it was, especially as to them who remained in Judaism after the coming of the Messiah, and the publication of his gospel. Nevertheless, the apostle tells us, there is a time coming, when this *veil also shall be taken away*, and *when it* [the body of that people] *shall turn to the Lord*, *ver. 16.* Or when any particular person is converted to God, then the veil of ignorance is taken away; the blindness of the mind, and hardness of heart is cured.

2. The condition of those who enjoy and believe the gospel, is much more happy. For, 1. They have liberty. *Where the Spirit of the Lord is*, and where he worketh, as he doth under the gospel dispensation, *there is liberty*, *ver. 17.* Freedom from the yoke of the ceremonial law, and from the servitude of corruption: Liberty of access to God, and freedom of speech in prayer: The heart is set at liberty, and enlarged to run the ways of God's commandments. 2. They have *light*. For with *open face we behold the glory of the Lord*, *ver. 18.* The Israelites saw the glory of God in a *cloud*, which was dark and dreadful; but Christians see the glory of the Lord, as in a *glass* more clearly and comfortably. It was the peculiar privilege of Moses for God to converse with him face to face in a friendly manner; but now, all true Christians do see him more clearly with open face: He sheweth them his glory. 3. This light and liberty is *transforming*. We are changed into the *same image, from glory to glory*, *ver. 18.* from one degree of glorious grace unto another, till grace here be consummated in glory for ever. How much therefore should Christians prize and improve these privileges! We should not rest contented without an experimental knowledge of the transforming power of the gospel, by the operation of the Spirit, bringing us into a conformity to the temper and tendency of the glorious gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

CHAP. IV.

In this chapter we have an account, (1.) Of the constancy of the apostle and his fellow-labourers in their work. Their constancy is declared, *ver. 1.* Their sincerity is vouched, *ver. 2.* An objection is obviated, *ver. 3, 4.* And their integrity proved, *ver. 5, 6, 7.* (2.) Of their courage and patience under their sufferings. *Where see what their sufferings were, together with their allays*, *ver. 8—12.* And what it was that kept them from sinking and fainting under them, *ver. 13, ad fin.*

1. **T**HEREFORE seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy we faint not: 2. But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth, commending our selves to every mans conscience in the sight of God. 3. But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: 4. In which the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. 5. For we preach not our selves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and our selves your servants for Jesus sake. 6. For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ. 7. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

The apostle had in the foregoing chapter been *magnifying his office*, upon the consideration of the excellency or glory of that gospel, about which he did officiate; and now in this chapter his design is to vindicate their ministry from the accusation of false teachers, who charged them as deceitful workers, or endeavoured to prejudice the minds of the people against them on account of their sufferings. He tells them therefore how they did believe, and how they shewed their value for their office as ministers of the gospel: They were not puffed up with pride, but spurred on to great diligence. *Seeing we have this ministry*, are so much distinguished and dignified, we do not take state upon ourselves, nor indulge to idleness, but are excited to the better performance of our duty. Two things in general we have an account of, *viz.*

[1.] Their constancy and sincerity in their work and labour. Concerning which, observe,

(1.) Their constancy and perseverance in their work is declared. *We faint not*, ver. 1. under the difficulty of our work, nor do we desist from our labour. And this their steadfastness was owing to the *mercy of God*. From the same mercy and grace that they received the *apostleship*, Rom. i. 5. they received strength to persevere in the work of that office. Note, That as it is great mercy and grace to be called to be saints, and especially to be *counted faithful, and be put into the ministry*, 1 Tim. i. 12. so it is owing to the mercy and grace of God, if we continue faithful, and persevere in our work with diligence. The best men in the world would faint in their work, and under their burdens, if they did not receive mercy from God. *By the grace of God I am what I am*, said this great apostle in his former epistle to these Corinthians, chap. xv. 10. And that *mercy* which hath helped us *out*, and helped us *on* hitherto, we may rely upon to help us even to the *end*.

(2.) Their sincerity in their work is avouched, ver. 2. in several expressions. *We have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty*. The things of dishonesty are *hidden things*, that will not bear the light; and those that practise them, are or should be ashamed of them, especially when they are known. Such things the apostle did not allow of, but did *renounce* and avoid with indignation. *Not walking in craftiness*, or in disguise, acting with art and cunning, but in great simplicity and with open freedom. They had no base and wicked designs covered with fair and specious pretences of something that was good. Nor did they in their preaching *handle the word of God deceitfully*: But as he said before, they used *great plainness of speech*, and did not make their ministry to serve a turn, or to truckle to base designs. They had not cheated the people with falsehood instead of truth. Some think the apostle alludeth to the deceit which treacherous gamesters use, or that of hucksters in the market, that mix bad wares with good. The apostles acted not like such persons, but they *manifested the truth to every man's conscience*, declaring nothing but what in their *own* conscience they believed to be true, and might serve for the conviction of *their* consciences who heard them, who were to judge for themselves, and to give an account for themselves. And all this they did *as in the sight of God*, desiring thus to *commend themselves* unto God, and to the consciences of men, by their undisguised sincerity. Note, That a steadfast adherence to the truths of the gospel, will commend ministers and people; and sincerity or uprightness will preserve a man's reputation, and the good opinion of wise and good men concerning him.

(3.) An objection is obviated, which might be thus formed: If it be thus, how then doth it come to pass, that the gospel is hid, and proved ineffectual as to some that hear it? To which the apostle answereth, by shewing this was not the fault of the gospel, nor of the preachers thereof. But the true reasons of this were, 1. *They are lost souls*, to whom the gospel is hid, or is ineffectual, ver. 3. Christ came to *save that which was lost*, Matt. xviii. 11. And the gospel of Christ is sent to save such; and if that do not find and save them, they are lost for ever, they must never expect any thing else to save them, for there is no other method or means of salvation: The hiding of the gospel therefore from souls, is both an evidence and cause of their ruin. 2. *The god of this world hath blinded their minds*, ver. 4. They are under the influence and power of the devil, who is here called the god of this world, and elsewhere the prince of this world, because of the great interest he hath in this world, and the homage that is paid to him by multitudes in the world, and the great sway that by divine permission he beareth in the world, and in the hearts of his subjects, or rather slaves. And as he is the *prince of darkness*, and ruler of the *darkness* of this world, so he darkeneth the understandings of men, and increaseth their prejudices, and supporteth his interest by keeping them in the dark, blinding their minds with ignorance, and error, and prejudices, that they should not *behold the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God*. Observe, 1. Christ's design by his gospel is to make a glorious discovery of God to the minds of men: Thus as the image of God, he demonstrateth the power and wisdom of God, and the grace and mercy of God for their salvation. But, 2. The design of the devil is to keep men in ignorance; and when he could not keep the light of the gospel

out of the world, he maketh it his great business to keep it out of the hearts of men.

(4.) A proof of their integrity is given, ver. 5. They made it their business to preach Christ, and *not themselves*. *We preach not our selves*; *self* was not the *matter* nor the *end* of the apostles preaching: They did not give out their own notions and private opinions, nor their passions and prejudices, for the word and will of God: Nor did they seek themselves to advance their own secular interest or glory: But they *preached Christ Jesus the Lord*; and thus it did become them, and behove them to do, as being Christ's servants. Their business was to make their master known to the world as the Messiah, or the Christ of God, and as (Jesus) the only saviour of men, and as the rightful Lord, and to advance his honour and glory. Note, All the lines of Christian doctrine do center in Christ; and in preaching Christ, we preach *all* we should preach. As to *ourselves*, saith the apostle, *we preach*, or declare that, *we are your servants for Jesus sake*. This was no compliment, but a real profession of a readiness to do good to their souls, and to promote their spiritual and eternal interest; and that for *Jesus sake*, not for their *own* sake, or their own advantage, but for Christ's sake, that they might imitate his great example, and advance his glory. Note, Ministers should not be of proud spirits, *lording it over God's heritage*, who are servants to the *souls* of men: Yet, at the same time, they must avoid the meanness of spirit, to become the servants of the *humours*, or the *lusts* of men; if they should thus *seek to please men*, they would not be the *servants of Christ*, Gal. i. 10. And there was good reason,

1. Why they should preach Christ. For by gospel-light we have the *knowledge of the glory of God*, which shineth in the *face of Jesus Christ*, ver. 6. And the light of this *sun of righteousness*, is more glorious than that light, which God commanded to shine out of darkness. It is a pleasant thing for the eye to behold the sun in the firmament; but it is more pleasant and profitable, when the gospel shineth *in the heart*. Note, As light was the first-born of the *first* creation, so it is in the *new* creation: The illumination of the Spirit is his first work upon the soul: The grace of God created such a light in the soul, that they who *were sometimes darkness*, are made *light in the Lord*, Ephes. v. 8.

2. Why they should *not* preach *themselves*; because they were but *earthen vessels*; things of little or no worth or value. Here seemeth to be an allusion to the lamps, which Gideon's soldiers carried in earthen pitchers, Judg. vii. 16. The treasure of gospel-light and grace is put into *earthen vessels*, i. e. The ministers of the gospel are weak and frail creatures, and *subject to like passions* and infirmities as other men; they are mortal, and soon broken in pieces. And God hath so ordered it, that the weaker the vessels are, the stronger his power may appear to be, that the treasure itself should be valued the more. Note, There is an *excellency of power* in the gospel of Christ, to enlighten the mind, to convince the conscience, to convert the soul, and to rejoice the heart: But as all this power is from God the *author*, and not from men, who are but *instruments*, so that God in all things must be glorified.

8. *We are troubled on every side*, yet not distressed; *we are perplexed*, but not in despair; 9. Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; 10. Always bearing about in the body, the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. 11. For we which live, are alway delivered unto death for Jesus sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. 12. So then death worketh in us, but life in you. 13. We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken: we also believe, and therefore speak; 14. Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you. 15. For all things *are* for your sakes, that the abundant grace might, through the thanksgiving of many, redound to the glory of God. 16. For which cause we faint not, but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. 17. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory; 18. While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen, *are* temporal; but the things which are not seen, *are* eternal.

[2.] In these verses the apostle giveth an account of their courage and patience under all their sufferings. Where observe,

(1.) How

(1.) How their sufferings and patience under them is declared, *ver. 8—12*. The apostles were great sufferers, therein they followed their Master; Christ had told them, *that in the world they should have tribulation*, and so they had; yet they met with wonderful support, great relief, and many allays of their sorrows. *We are*, saith the apostle, *troubled on every side*, afflicted many ways, and meet with almost all sorts of troubles, *yet not distressed*, *ver. 8*. We are not hedged in, or cooped up, because we can see help in God, and help from God, and have liberty of access to God. Again, we are *perplexed*, oftentimes uncertain, and in doubt what will become of us, and not always without anxiety in our mind on this account, *yet not in despair*, *ver. 8*. even in our greatest perplexities, knowing that God is able to support us, and to deliver us, and in him we always place our trust and hope. Again, we are *persecuted* by men, pursued with hatred and violence from place to place, as men not worthy to live, yet *not forsaken* of God, *ver. 9*. Good men may be sometimes forsaken of their friends, as well as persecuted by their enemies; but God will never leave them nor forsake them. Again, We are sometimes dejected, or *cast down*; the enemy may in great measure prevail, and our spirits begin to fail us; there may be fears within, as well as fightings without, yet we are *not destroyed*, *ver. 9*. Still they were preserved, and kept their head above water. Note, Whatever condition the children of God may be in in this world, they have a *but not* to comfort themselves with; their case sometimes is bad, yea very bad, but *not so* bad as it might be.

The apostle speaketh of their sufferings as constant, and as a counter-part of the sufferings of Christ, *ver. 10*. The sufferings of Christ were after a sort re-acted in the sufferings of Christians; thus did they *bear about the dying of the Lord Jesus* in their body, setting before the world the great example of a suffering-Christ, *that the life of Jesus might also be made manifest*, i. e. That people might see the power of Christ's resurrection, and efficacy of grace in and from the living Jesus, manifested in and towards them, who did *yet live*, though they were always *delivered to death*, *ver. 11*. and though *death worked in them*, *ver. 12*. they being exposed to death, and ready to be swallowed up by death continually. Thus great were the sufferings of the apostles, that in comparison with them, other Christians were even at that time in prosperous circumstances. Death worketh in us; but *life in you*, *ver. 12*.

(2.) What it was that kept them from sinking and fainting under their sufferings, *ver. 13—18*. Whatever the burdens and troubles of good men may be, they have cause enough *not to faint*.

1. Faith kept them from fainting. *We have the same spirit of faith*, *ver. 13*. That faith which is of the operation of the Spirit; the *same* faith by which the saints of old did, and suffered such great things. Note, The grace of faith is a sovereign cordial, and effectual antidote against fainting fits in troublous times: The *Spirit* of faith will go far to bear up the *spirit* of a man under his infirmities; and as the apostle had David's example to imitate, who said *Psal. cxvi. 10*. I have believed, and therefore have I spoken, so he leaveth us *his* example to imitate: *We also believe*, saith he, *and therefore speak*. Note, As we receive help and encouragement from the good words and examples of others; so we should be careful to give a good example to others.

2. Hope of the resurrection kept them from sinking, *ver. 14*. They knew that Christ was raised, and that *his* resurrection was an earnest and assurance of *theirs*. This he had treated of largely in his former epistle to these Corinthians, *chap. xv*. And therefore their hope was firm, being well grounded, that he which raised up Christ the head will also raise up all his members. Note, The hope of the resurrection will encourage us in a suffering day, and set us above the fear of death: For what reason hath a good Christian to fear death, that dieth in hope of a joyful resurrection?

3. The consideration of the glory of God, and the benefit of the church, by means of their sufferings, kept them from fainting, *ver. 15*. Their sufferings were for the church's advantage, *vid. chap. i. 6*. and this did redound to God's glory. For when the church is edified, then God is glorified; and we may well afford to bear sufferings patiently and cheerfully, when we see others are the better for them, if they are instructed and edified, if they are confirmed and comforted. Note, The sufferings of Christ's ministers, as well as their preaching and conversation, are intended for the good of the church, and the glory of God.

4. The thoughts of the advantage their own souls would reap by the sufferings of their bodies, kept them from fainting. *Though our outward man perish, our inward man is renewed day by day*, *ver. 16*. Where note, 1. We have every one of us an *outward* and an *inward* man, i. e. a body and a soul. 2. If the outward man *perish* there is no remedy, it must and will be so, it was made to perish. 3. It is our happiness, if the decays of the outward man do contribute to the *renewing* of the inward man; if afflictions *outwardly* are gain to us *inwardly*; if when the body is sick and weak, and perishing, the soul is vigorous and prosperous. 4. The best of men have need of *further* renewing of the inward man, even *day by day*. Where the good work is begun, there is more work to be done, for the carrying it forward. And

as in wicked men things grow every day worse and worse, so in godly men they grow better and better.

5. The prospect of eternal life and happiness kept them from fainting, and was a mighty support and comfort. As to which observe, 1. The apostle and his fellow-sufferers saw their afflictions *working* towards heaven, and that there they would end at last, *ver. 17*. Whereupon they weighed things aright in the balance of the sanctuary; they did as it were put the heavenly glory in one scale, and their earthly sufferings in the other; and pondering things in their thought they found afflictions to be *light*, and the glory of heaven to be *a far more exceeding weight*. That which sense was ready to pronounce heavy and long, grievous and tedious; faith perceived to be *light*, and short, but *for a moment*. On the other hand, the worth and weight of the crown of glory, as it is exceeding great in it self; so it is esteemed to be by the believing soul, it far exceeds all his expressions and thought; and it will be a special support in our sufferings, when we can perceive them appointed as the way, and preparing us for the enjoyment of the future glory.

(2.) Their *faith* enabled them to make this right judgment of things. *We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen*, *ver. 18*. It is by *faith* we see God, who is invisible, *Heb. xi. 27*. and by that we look to an *unseen* heaven and hell, and faith is the *evidence of things not seen*. Note, 1. There are *unseen* things, as well as things that are seen. 2. There is this vast difference between them, unseen things are *eternal*, seen things but *temporal*, or temporary only. 3. It is by faith that we not only discern these things, and the great difference between them, but by that also we take *our aim* at unseen things, and chiefly regard them, and make it *our end and scope*, not to escape *present* evils, and obtain *present* good, both of which are temporal and transitory; but to escape *future* evil, and obtain *future* good things, which though *unseen* are real, and certain, and eternal; and faith is the *substance of things hoped for*, as well as the evidence of things not seen, *Heb. xi. 1*.

CHAP. V.

The apostle proceedeth in shewing the reasons why they did not faint under their afflictions, viz. their expectation, desire, and assurance of happiness after death, *ver. 1—5*. and maketh an inference for the comfort of believers in their present state, *ver. 6, 7, 8*. and another to quicken them in their duty, *ver. 9, 10, 11*. Then he maketh an apology for seeming to commend himself, and giveth a good reason for his zeal and diligence, *ver. 12—15*. And mentions two things that are necessary, in order to our living to Christ, viz. regeneration and reconciliation, *ver. 16*. ad fin.

1. **F**OR we know, that if our earthly house of *this* tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2. For in this we groan earnestly, desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: 3. If so be that being clothed, we shall not be found naked. 4. For we that are in *this* tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. 5. Now he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing, is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. 6. Therefore *we* are always confident, knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: 7. (For we walk by faith, not by sight) 8. We are confident, *I say*, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. 9. Wherefore we labour, that whether present or absent we may be accepted of him. 10. For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things *done* in his body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad. 11. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God, and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.

The apostle in these verses pursueth the argument of the former chapter, concerning the grounds of their courage and patience under afflictions. And,

(1.) He mentioneth their expectation, and desire, and assurance of eternal happiness after death, *ver. 1—5*. Observe particularly,

1. The believer's *expectation* of eternal happiness after death, *ver. 1*. He doth not only *know*, or is well assured by faith of the truth and reality of the thing itself, that there is another and a happy life after this present life is ended; but he hath *good hope* through grace, of his interest in that everlasting blessedness of the *unseen*

unseen world; we know *we have* a building of God, we have a firm and well-grounded expectation of the future felicity. Let us take notice, 1. *What* heaven is in the eye and hope of a believer; he looketh upon it as *an house*, or habitation; a dwelling-place, a resting-place, an hiding-place; our *Father's* house where there are many mansions, and our everlasting *home*: it is an house in the *heavens*, in that high and holy place, which doth as far excel all the palaces of this earth, as the heavens are high above the earth: it is a *building of God*, whose builder and maker is God, and therefore is worthy of its author; the happiness of the future state is what God hath prepared for them that love him: it is *eternal* in the heavens, *everlasting habitations*, not like the earthly tabernacles, the poor cottages of clay, in which our souls now dwell, that are mouldering and decaying, *whose foundations are in the dust*. 2. *When* it is expected this happiness shall be enjoyed, *viz.* immediately after death; so soon as *our house of this earthly tabernacle is dissolved*. Note, 1. That the body, this *earthly house*, is but a *tabernacle*, that must be *dissolved* shortly; the nails or pins will be drawn, and the cords be loosed, and then the body returneth to dust as it was. 2. When this comes to pass, then cometh the house *not made with hands*. The spirit returneth to God who gave it, and such as have walked with God here, shall dwell with God for ever.

2. The believers *earnest desires* after this future blessedness, which is expressed by this word *σενάρομεν*, *we groan*: which denoteth, 1. A groaning of *sorrow under* a heavy load; so do believers groan under the burden of life; *in this*, we groan earnestly, *ver. 2. i. e.* We that are in *this tabernacle* do groan, *being burdened*, *ver. 4.* The body of flesh is a heavy burden, the calamities of life are a heavy load. But believers do groan, because burdened with a body of sin, and the many corruptions that are still remaining and raging in them. This maketh them complain, *O wretched man that I am!* Rom. vii. 24. 2. There is a groaning of *desire after* the happiness of another life; and thus believers do groan, earnestly desiring *to be clothed upon with our house, which is from heaven*, *ver. 2.* to obtain a blessed immortality, *that mortality might be swallowed up of life*, *ver. 4.* *That being found clothed, we shall not be naked*, *ver. 3.* That if it were the will of God, we might not *sleep*, but be changed: for it is not desirable in itself to be unclothed; death considered merely as a separation of soul and body is not to be desired, but dreaded rather; but considered as a passage to glory, the believer is *willing rather to die than live, to be absent from the body, that he may be present with the Lord*, *ver. 8.* to leave this body, that he may go to Christ, and to put off these rags of mortality, that he may put on the robes of glory. Note, 1. Death will strip us of the clothing of flesh, and all the comforts of life, as well as put an end to all our troubles here below: Naked we came into this world, and naked shall we go out of it. But, 2. Gracious souls are not found naked in the other world; no, they are clothed with garments of praise, with robes of righteousness and glory. They shall be delivered out of all their troubles, and shall have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, *Rev. vii. 14.*

3. The believers *assurance* of their interest in this future blessedness, on a double account; 1. From the *experience of the grace* of God, in preparing and making them meet for this blessedness. He that hath *wrought us for the self same thing, is God*, *ver. 5.* Note, All that are designed for heaven hereafter, are *wrought* or prepared for heaven whilst they are here; the stones of that spiritual building and temple above, are squared and fashioned here below. And he that hath wrought us for this, *is God*; because nothing less than a divine power can make a soul partaker of a divine nature; no hand less than the hand of God can work us for this thing: A great deal is to be done to prepare our souls for heaven, and that *preparation of the heart is from the Lord*. 2. The *earnest of the Spirit* gave them this assurance; for an earnest is part of payment, and secureth the full payment. The present graces and comforts of the Spirit, are earnest of everlasting grace and comfort.

(2.) The apostle maketh an inference for the comfort of believers in their present state and condition in this world, *ver. 6, 7, 8.* Where observe,

1. What their present state and condition is, they *are absent from the Lord*, *ver. 6.* They are pilgrims and strangers in this world, they do but sojourn here in their *earthly home*, or in this tabernacle; and though God is *with us* here, by his Spirit, and in his ordinances, yet we are not *with him* as we hope to be: we cannot see his face whilst we live. *For we walk by faith, not by sight*, *ver. 7. i. e.* We have not that vision and fruition of God, as of an object that is present with us, and as we hope for hereafter, when we *shall see as we are seen*. Note, *Faith* is for this world, and *sight* is reserved for the other world; and it is our duty, and will be our interest to walk by faith, till we come to live by sight.

2. How comfortable and courageous we ought to be in all the troubles of life, and in the hour of death. *Therefore we are*, or ought to be, *always confident*, *ver. 6.* And again, *ver. 8.* *We are confident and willing*, rather to be absent from the body. True Christians, if they duly consider the prospect faith giveth them of another world, and the good reasons of their hope of blessed-

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ness after death, should be comforted under the troubles of life, and supported in the hour of death: they should take courage, when they are encountering the last enemy, and be willing rather to die than live, when it is the will of God they should *put off this tabernacle*. Note, As those that are born from above, do long to be there; so it is but *being absent* from the body, and we shall very soon be present with the Lord; *but* to die, and be with Christ; but *to close our eyes* to all things in this world, and we shall *open* them in a world of glory: Faith will be turned into *sight*.

(3.) He proceedeth to make an inference to excite and quicken himself and others to duty, *ver. 9, 10, 11.* And so it is, that well-grounded hopes of heaven, will be far from giving the least encouragement to sloth and sinful security; but, on the contrary, they should stir us up to use the greatest care and diligence in religion: *Wherefore*, or because we hope to be present with the Lord, *we labour* and take pains, *ver. 9.* *φιλοτιμέμεθα*, we are ambitious, and labour as industriously as the most ambitious men do to obtain what they aim at. Here observe,

1. What it was the apostle was thus ambitious of, and that was *acceptance with God*. We labour, that living and dying, *whether present in the body, or absent from the body, we may be accepted of him*, *i. e.* the Lord, *ver. 9.* That we may *please him who hath chosen us*: That our great Lord may say to us: *Well done*. This they coveted as the greatest favour, and the highest honour: it was the top of their ambition.

2. What further quickening motives they had to excite their diligence, from the consideration of the judgment to come, *ver. 10, 11.* And there are many things relating to this great matter, that should awe the best of men into the utmost care and diligence in religion, *e. g.* The *certainly* of this judgment, for we *must* appear; the *universality* of it, for we *must all* appear; the great *Judge*, before whose *judgment-seat* we must appear, *viz.* the Lord Jesus Christ, who *himself* will appear in flaming fire; the *recompence* to be then received, for things done in the body; which will be very *particular* unto *every one*; and very *just*, according to what we have done, whether *good or bad*. The apostle calls this awful judgment *the terror of the Lord*, *ver. 11.* And by the consideration thereof was excited to *persuade men* to repent, and live a holy life, that when Christ shall appear *terribly*, they may appear before him *comfortably*. And concerning his fidelity and diligence, he comfortably appealeth unto God, and the consciences of them he wrote unto: *We are made manifest unto God, and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.*

12. For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that you may have somewhat to *answer* them which glory in appearance, and not in heart. 13. For whether we be besides ourselves, *it is to God*: or whether we be sober, *it is for your cause*. 14. For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: 15. And *that* he died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

Here observe,

(1.) The apostle maketh an apology for seeming to commend himself, *ver. 12.* And tells them, 1. It was not to *commend themselves*, or for their own sakes, that he had spoken of their fidelity and diligence in the former verses; nor was he willing to suspect their good opinion of him. But, 2. The true reason was this, to put an argument in their mouths, wherewith to answer his accusers, who made vain boastings, and *gloried in appearances* only; that he might give them *an occasion to glory on their behalf*, or to defend them against the reproaches of their adversaries. And if the people can say, the *word* hath been manifested to their consciences, and been effectual to their conversion and edification, this is the best defence they can make for the *ministry of the word*, when they are vilified and reproached.

(2.) He giveth good reasons for their great zeal and diligence. Some of Paul's adversaries had, it is likely, reproached him for his zeal and fervour, as if he had been a mad man, or, in the language of our days, a *fanatick*; they imputed all to enthusiasm, as the Roman governour told him, *Much learning had made him mad*, Acts xxvi. 24. But the apostle tells them,

1. It was for the glory of God, and the good of the church, he was thus zealous and industrious. *Whether we be besides ourselves, or whether we be sober*, *i. e.* Whether you or others do think the one or the other, it is *to God*, and for his glory; and it is *for your cause*, or to promote your good, *ver. 13.* If they manifested the greatest ardour and vehemency at some times, and used the greatest calmness in *strong reasonings* at other times, it was for the best ends, and in both methods they had good reason for what they did. For,

2. *The love of Christ constrained them*, *ver. 14.* They were under the sweetest and strongest constraints to do what they did. Love hath a constraining virtue to excite ministers and private Christians in their duty. *Our love to Christ* will have this

virtue,

virtue, and *Christ's love to us*, which was manifested in this great instance of his *dying for us*, will have this effect upon us, if it be duly considered, and rightly *judged of*: For observe, how the apostle argueth for the reasonableness of love's constraints; and declareth,

1. What we were before, and must have continued to be, had not Christ died for us. *We were dead*, ver. 14. If one died for all, then were all dead; dead in *law*, under sentence of death; dead in *sins* and trespasses, spiritually dead. Note, This was the deplorable condition of all those that Christ died for: they were lost and undone, dead and ruined, and must have remained thus miserable for ever, if Christ had not died for them.

2. What such should do, for whom Christ died; namely, That they should *live to him*. This is what Christ designed, that *they which live*, which are made alive unto God by means of his death, *should live to him, that died for them, and rose again*; for their sakes also, and that they should not live *to themselves*, ver. 15. Note, We should not make *ourselves*, but *Christ*, the end of our living and actings: and it was one end of Christ's death to cure us of this *self-love*, and to excite us always to act under the commanding influence of *his love*. A Christian's life should be consecrated to Christ; and then do we live as we ought to live, when we live to Christ, who died for us.

16. Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we *him* no more. 17. Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are past away, behold, all things are become new. 18. And all things *are* of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; 19. To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. 20. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech *you* by us: we pray *you* in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. 21. For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

In these verses the apostle mentioneth two things that are necessary in order to our living to Christ, both of which are the consequences of Christ's dying for us, *viz.* regeneration, and reconciliation.

First, Regeneration, which consisteth in two things, namely,

(1.) Weanedness from the world. *Henceforth we know no man after the flesh*, ver. 16. *i. e.* We do not *own* or affect any person or thing in this world for carnal ends and outward advantage: we are enabled by divine grace, not to mind or regard this world, or the things of the world, but to live above it. The love of Christ is in our hearts, and the world is under our feet. Note, Good Christians must enjoy the comforts of this life, and their relations in this world, with a holy indifferency: *Yea though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet*, saith the apostle, *we know him no more*. It is questioned whether Paul had seen Christ in the flesh. However, the rest of the apostles had, and so might some amongst them he wrote unto. However, he would not have them value themselves upon that account; for even the bodily presence of Christ is not to be desired or doted upon by his disciples: We must live upon his spiritual presence, and the comfort of that. Note, Those that make images of Christ, and use them in their worship, do not take the way that God hath appointed for the strengthening their faith and quickening their affections; for it is the will of God we should not know Christ any more after the flesh.

(2.) A thorow change of the heart. *For if any man be in Christ*, *i. e.* if any man be a Christian indeed, and will approve himself such, *he is*, or he must be, *a new creature*, ver. 17. Some read it, *Let him be* a new creature. This ought to be the care of all that profess the Christian faith, that they be new creatures; not only that they have a new *name*, and wear a new *livery*, but that they have a new *heart*, and new *nature*. And so great is the change the grace of God makes in the soul, that as it followeth, *old things are passed away*, old *thoughts*, old *principles*, and old *practices* are passed away; and *all these things must become new*. Note, Regenerating grace creates a new world in the soul, all things are new. The renewed man acteth from new principles, by new rules, with new ends, and in new company.

Secondly, Reconciliation; which is here spoken of under a double notion.

(1.) As an unquestionable privilege, ver. 18, 19. Reconciliation supposeth a quarrel or breach of friendship; and sin hath made a breach, it hath broken the friendship between God and man. The heart of the sinner is filled with enmity against God, and God is justly offended with the sinner. Yet behold there

may be a reconciliation, the offended Majesty of heaven is willing to be reconciled. And observe,

1. He hath appointed the *mediator of reconciliation*, Jesus Christ. He hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, ver. 18. God is to be owned from first to last in the undertaking and performance of the Mediator. *All things* relating to our reconciliation by Jesus Christ, are *of God*, who by the mediation of Jesus Christ, hath *reconciled the world to himself*, and put himself into a capacity of being actually reconciled to offenders, without any wrong or injury to his justice or holiness; and doth not *impute* to men their *trespasses*, but recedeth from the rigour of the first covenant which was broken, and doth not insist upon the advantage he might justly take against us for the breach of that covenant, but is willing to enter upon a new treaty, and into a new covenant of grace, and according to the tenor thereof, freely to forgive us all our sins, and justify freely by his grace all them that do believe.

2. He hath appointed the *ministry of reconciliation*, ver. 18. By the inspiration of God the scriptures were written, which contain the *word* of reconciliation; shewing us that peace was made by the blood of the cross, that reconciliation is wrought, and directing us how we may be interested therein. And he hath appointed the *office* of the ministry, which is a *ministry of reconciliation*: *i. e.* ministers are to open and proclaim to sinners the terms of mercy and reconciliation, and persuade them to comply therewith. For,

(2.) Reconciliation is here spoken of as our indispensable duty, ver. 20. As God is willing to be reconciled to us, we ought to be *reconciled to God*. And it is the great end and design of the gospel, that word of reconciliation, to prevail upon sinners to lay aside their enmity against God. And faithful ministers are *Christ's ambassadors* sent to treat with sinners on peace and reconciliation. They come *in God's name* with his intreaties, and act in *Christ's stead*, doing the very thing he did when he was upon this earth, and what it is his will to be done now that he is in heaven. Wonderful condescension! Though God can be no loser by the quarrel, nor gainer by the peace, yet by his ministers he doth *beseech* sinners to lay aside their enmity, and accept of the terms he offereth, that they would be reconciled to him, to all his attributes, to all his laws, and to all his providences; to believe in the Mediator, to accept the atonement, and comply with his gospel in all the parts of it, and in the whole design of it. And for our encouragement so to do, the apostle subjoineth what should be well known and duly considered by us, ver. 20. namely, 1. The purity of the Mediator, that *he knew no sin*. 2. The sacrifice he offered, *he was made sin*; not a sinner, but *sin*, *i. e.* a sin-offering, a sacrifice for sin. 3. The end and design of all this, that *we might be made the righteousness of God in him*, *i. e.* might be justified freely by the grace of God through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. Note, 1. As Christ that knew no sin of *his own* was made sin for us, so we that have no righteousness of *our own* are made the righteousness of God in him. 2. Our reconciliation to God is *only* through Jesus Christ, and for the sake of his merit: on him therefore we must rely, and make mention of his righteousness, and his only.

CHAP. VI.

In this chapter the apostle giveth an account of his general errand to all that he preached unto; with the several arguments and methods he used, ver. 1—10. Then he doth address himself particularly to the Corinthians, giving them good cautions with great affection and strong arguments, ver. 11—18.

1. **WE** then as workers together *with him*, beseech *you* also, that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. 2. (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation) 3. Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed: 4. But in all things approving our selves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, 5. In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings, 6. By pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, 7. By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, 8. By honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true; 9. As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; 10. As sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.

In these verses we have an account of the apostle's general errand and exhortation to all that he preached to in every place where he came, with the several arguments and methods he used.

Observe,

(1.) The errand or exhortation itself, namely, To comply with the gospel-offers of reconciliation; that being favoured with the gospel, they would not receive this *grace of God in vain*, ver. 1. The gospel is a *word of grace* sounding in our ears, but it will be in vain for us to hear it, unless we believe it, and comply with the end and design of it. And as it is the duty of the ministers of the gospel to exhort and persuade their hearers to accept of grace and mercy that is offered to them, so they are honoured with this high title of *co-workers with God*. Note, 1. They must *work*; and must *work for God*, and his glory; *for souls*, and their good: and they are *workers with God*, yet under him, as instruments only; however, if they are faithful, they may hope to find God *working with them*, and their labour will be effectual. 2. Observe the language and way of the spirit of the gospel: it is not with roughness and severity, but with all mildness and gentleness, to *beseech* and intreat, to use exhortations and arguments, in order to prevail with sinners, and overcome their natural *unwillingness* to be reconciled to God, and to be happy for ever.

(1.) The arguments and method which the apostle used. And here he tells them,

1. The present time is the only proper season to accept of grace that is offered, and improve that grace which is afforded. *NOW is the accepted time, NOW is the day of salvation*, ver. 2. The gospel-day is a day of salvation, and the means of grace the means of salvation, and the offers of the gospel the offers of salvation, and the *present* time the only *proper* time to accept of these offers: *To day, while it is called to day*. The *morrow* is none of ours: we know not *what* will be on the *morrow*, nor *where* we shall be: and we should remember that *present* seasons of grace are short and uncertain, and cannot be recalled when they are past. It is therefore our duty and interest to improve them whilst we enjoy them, and no less than our salvation depends upon our so doing.

2. What caution they used not to give offence that might hinder the success of their preaching. *Giving no offence in any thing*, ver. 3. And the apostle had great difficulty to behave prudently and inoffensively towards the Jews and Gentiles, for many of both sorts watched for his halting, and sought occasion to *blame him* and his *ministry*, or his conversation; therefore he was very cautious not to *give* offence to them that were so apt to *take* offence, that he might not offend the Jews by unnecessary zeal against the law, nor the Gentiles by unnecessary compliances with such as were zealous for the law. He was careful in all his words and actions not to give offence, or occasion of guilt or grief. Note, When others are too apt to *take* offence, we should be cautious lest we *give* offence; and ministers especially should be careful lest they do any thing that may bring *blame* on their ministry, or render that unsuccessful.

3. Their constant aim and endeavour *in all things to approve themselves faithful as became the ministers of God*, ver. 4. We see how much stress the apostle upon all occasions layeth on fidelity in our work, because much of our success doth depend upon that. His eye was single, and his heart upright in all his ministrations; and his great desire was to be the servant of God, and to approve himself so. Note, Ministers of the gospel should look upon themselves as *God's servants*, or ministers, and act in every thing suitable to that character. So did the apostle,

1. *By much patience in afflictions*. He was a great sufferer, and met with many *afflictions*, oftentimes *in necessities*, and wanting the conveniences, if not the necessities of life; in *distresses*, being straitened on every side, hardly knowing what to do: in *strips*. *2. In imprisonments*: in *tumults* raised by the Jews and Gentiles against him; in *labours*: not only in preaching the gospel, but in travelling from place to place for that end, and working with his hands to supply his necessities: in *watchings* and in *fastings*, either voluntary upon a religious account, or involuntary for the sake of religion: but he exercised *much patience* in all, ver. 4, 5. Note, 1. It is the lot of faithful ministers often to be reduced to great difficulties, and to stand in need of much patience. 2. Those that would approve themselves to God, must approve themselves faithful in trouble as well as in peace, not only in doing the work of God diligently, but also in bearing the will of God patiently.

2. *By acting from good principles*. The apostle went by a good principle in all he did, and tells them what his principles were, ver. 6, 7. viz. *Pureness*; and there is no piety without purity. A care to keep ourselves unspotted from the world is necessary in order to our acceptance with God. *Knowledge* was another principle, and zeal without this is but madness. He also acted with *long-suffering and kindness*; being not easily provoked, but bearing with the hardness of mens hearts, and hard treatment from their hands, whom he kindly endeavoured to do good unto. He acted under the influence of the *Holy Ghost*, from the noble principle of *unfeigned love*, according to the rule of the *word of truth*, under the supports and assistance of the *power of God*, having on the *armour of righteousness*, a consciousness of universal righte-

ousness and holiness; which is the best defence against the temptations of prosperity *on the right hand*, and of adversity *on the left*.

3. By a due temper and behaviour under all the variety of conditions in this world, ver. 8, 9, 10. We must expect to meet with many alterations of our circumstances and conditions in this world; and it will be a great evidence of our integrity, if we preserve a right temper of mind, and duly behave ourselves under them all. The apostles met with *honour and dishonour*, good report and bad report: and good men in this world must expect to meet with some dishonour and reproaches to balance their honour and esteem; and we stand in need of the grace of God to arm us against the temptations of honour on the one hand, and to bear good report without pride; and of dishonour on the other hand, and to bear reproaches without impatience or recrimination. It should seem that persons differently represented the apostles in their reports; that *some* represented them as the *best*, and *others* as the *worst* of men: by some they were counted *deceivers*, and run down as such; by others as *true*, preaching the gospel of truth, and men that were true to the trust reposed in them. They were slighted by the men of the world as *unknown*, men of no figure nor account, not worth the taking notice of; yet in all the churches of Christ they were *well known*, and of great account: they were looked upon as *dying*, being killed all the day long, and their interest was thought to be a dying interest; and yet *behold*, saith the apostle, *we live*, and live comfortably, and bear up cheerfully under all our hardships, and go on conquering, and to conquer. They were chastened, and often fell under the lash of the law, yet not killed: and though it was thought they were *sorrowful*, a company of mopeish and melancholy men, always sighing and mourning; yet they were *always rejoicing* in God, and had the greatest reason to rejoice always. They were despised as *poor*, upon the account of their poverty in this world; and yet they *made many rich*, by preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ. They were thought *to have nothing*, and silver and gold they had none, houses and lands they had none; yet they *possessed all things*; they had nothing in this world, but they had a treasure in heaven. Their effects lay in another country, in another world. They had nothing in themselves, but possessed all things in Christ. Such a paradox is a Christian's life, and through such variety of conditions and reports lieth our way to heaven, and we should be careful in all these things to approve ourselves to God.

11. O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged. 12. Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels. 13. Now for a recompence in the same, (I speak as unto my children) be ye also enlarged. 14. Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? 15. And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth, with an infidel? 16. And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 17. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, 18. And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

The apostle proceedeth to address himself more particularly to the Corinthians, and cautions them against mingling themselves with unbelievers. Where observe,

(1.) How the caution is introduced with a profession in a very pathetic manner of the most tender affection to them, *even like that of a father to his children*, ver. 11, 12, 13. Though the apostle was happy in a great fluency of expressions, yet he seemed to want words how to signify the warm affections he had for these Corinthians, *q. d.* "O ye Corinthians, to whom I am now writing, I would fain convince you how well I love you: we are desirous to promote the spiritual and eternal welfare of all that we preach unto, yet *our mouth is open unto you, and our heart is enlarged unto you*, in a special manner." And because his heart was thus enlarged with love to them, therefore he opened his mouth so freely to them, in kind admonitions and exhortations. *We are not*, saith he, *straitened in us*; we would gladly do you all the service we can, and promote your comfort, as helpers of your faith and your joy; and if it be otherwise, the fault is in your selves: it is *because you are straitened in your selves*, and fail in suitable returns to us, through some misapprehensions concerning us; and all we desire *as a recompence*, is only that you would be proportionably affected to us, as children should love their father. Note, It is desirable that there should be a mutual good affection between ministers and their people, and this would greatly tend to their mutual comfort and advantage.

(2.) The

(2.) The caution or exhortation itself, not to mingle themselves with unbelievers, not to *be unequally yoked* with them, ver. 14. Either,

1. In stated relations. It is an ill thing for good people to join in affinity with the wicked and profane: these will draw different ways, and that will be galling and grievous. Those relations that are our choice, must be chosen by rule; and it is good for those that are themselves the children of God, to join with those that are so likewise, for there is more danger that the bad will damage the good, than hope that the good will benefit the bad.

2. In common conversation. We should not yoke our selves in friendship and acquaintance with wicked men and unbelievers. Though we cannot wholly avoid seeing and hearing, and being with such, yet we should never chuse them for our bosom-friends.

3. Much less should we join in religious communion with them, we must not join with them in their idolatrous services, nor concur with them in their false worship, nor any abominations; we must not confound together the table of the Lord, and the table of devils; the house of God, and the house of Rimmon. The apostle giveth several good reasons against this corrupt mixture.

1. It is a very great absurdity, ver. 14, 15. It is an *unequal yoking* of things together that will not agree together, as bad as for the Jews to have plowed with an ox and an ass, or to have sowed divers sorts of grain intermixed. What an absurdity is it to think of joining *righteousness* and *unrighteousness*, or mingling *light* and *darkness*, fire and water together? Believers are and should be righteous, but unbelievers are unrighteous: Believers are made light in the Lord, but unbelievers are in darkness; and what comfortable communion can these have together? Christ and Belial are contrary one to the other, they have opposite interests and designs, so that it is impossible there should be any *concord* or agreement between them. It is absurd therefore to think of lifting under both; and if the believer hath part with an infidel, he doth what in him lieth to bring Christ and Belial together.

2. It is a dishonour to the Christian's profession, ver. 16. For Christians are by profession, and should be in reality, the *temples of the living God*, i. e. dedicated to, and employed for the service of God, who hath promised to reside in them, *to dwell and walk in them*, and stand in a special relation to them, and take a special care of them, that he will be *their God*, and they shall be *his people*. Now there can be no agreement between the *temple of God* and *idols*. Idols are rivals with God for his honour, and God is a *jealous God*, and will not give his glory to another.

3. There is a great deal of danger in communicating with unbelievers and idolaters; danger of being defiled, and of being rejected: therefore the exhortation is, ver. 17. *To come out from among them*, and keep at a due distance; *to be separate*, as one would avoid the society of them that have the leprosy or the plague, for fear of taking infection, and not *to touch the unclean thing*, lest we are defiled: and who can touch pitch, and not be defiled by it? We must take care not to defile ourselves by converse with those who defile themselves with sin, so is the will of God, as we ever hope to be *received* and not rejected by him.

4. It is base ingratitude to God for all the favours he hath bestowed upon believers, and promised to them, ver. 18. God hath promised to be a *Father* to them, and that they shall be *his sons and his daughters*; and is there a greater honour or happiness than this? How ungrateful a thing then must it be, if such who have this dignity and felicity, should degrade and debase themselves by mingling with unbelievers? *Do we thus requite the Lord, O foolish and unwise?*

C H A P. VII.

This chapter begins with an exhortation to progressive holiness, and a due regard to the ministers of the gospel, ver. 1—4. Then the apostle returns from a long digression, to speak further of the affair concerning the incestuous person, and tells them what comfort he received in his distress about that matter, upon his meeting with Titus, ver. 5, 6, 7. and how he rejoiced in their repentance, with the evidences thereof, ver. 8—11. And lastly, he concludeth with endeavouring to comfort the Corinthians, upon whom his admonitions had had so good an effect, ver. 12—16.

1. **H**AVING therefore these promises (dearly beloved) let us cleanse our selves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. 2. Receive us: we have wronged no man, we have corrupted no man, we have defrauded no man. 3. I speak not this to condemn you: for I have said before, that you are in our hearts to die and live with you. 4. Great is my boldness of speech toward you, great is my glorying of you: I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation.

These verses contain a double exhortation.

(1.) To make a progress in holiness, or *to perfect holiness in the fear of God*, ver. 1. This exhortation is given with most tender affection to them that were *dearly beloved*, and enforced by strong arguments, even the consideration of those exceeding great and precious promises which were mentioned in the former chapter, and which the Corinthians had an interest in, and a title to. And the promises of God are strong inducements to sanctification, in both the branches thereof, namely,

1. *The dying unto sin*, or mortifying our lusts and corruptions: we must *cleanse our selves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit*. Sin is filthiness, and there are defilements of body and mind; there are sins of the flesh, that are committed with the body; and sins of the Spirit, spiritual wickednesses; and we must cleanse ourselves from the filthiness of both, for God is to be glorified both with body and soul.

2. *The living unto righteousness and holiness*. If we hope God is our Father, we must endeavour to be *partakers of his holiness*, to be holy as he is holy, and perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect. We must be still perfecting holiness, and not be contented with sincerity, which is our gospel-perfection, without aiming at sinless perfection, though we shall always come short of it whilst we are in this world; and this we must do in the *fear of God*, which is the root and principle of all religion, and there is no holiness without it. Note, Faith and hope in the promises of God, must not destroy our fear of God, *who taketh pleasure in them that fear him, and hope in his mercy*.

(2.) To shew a due regard to the ministers of the gospel. *Receive us*, ver. 2. Those that labour in the word and doctrine should be had in reputation, and be highly esteemed for their work's sake: and this would be a help to making progress in holiness. If the ministers of the gospel are thought contemptible because of their office, there is danger lest the gospel itself be contemned also. The apostle did not think it any disparagement to court the favour of the Corinthians; and though we must flatter none, yet we must be genteel towards all.

He tells them,

1. He had done nothing to forfeit their esteem and good-will, but was cautious not to do any thing to deserve their ill-will, ver. 2. *We have wronged no man*: we have done you no harm, but always designed you good. *I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel*, said he to the elders of Ephesus, *Acts xx. 33*. *We have corrupted no man*, by false doctrines, or flattering speeches. *We have defrauded no man*; i. e. we have not sought ourselves, or to promote our own secular interest by crafty and greedy measures, to the damage of any persons. This is an appeal like that of Samuel, *1 Sam. xii*. Note, Then may ministers the more confidently expect esteem and favour from the people, when they can safely appeal to them that they are guilty of nothing that deserveth disesteem or displeasure.

2. He did not herein reflect upon them for want of affection to him, ver. 3, 4. So tenderly and cautiously did the apostle deal with the Corinthians, among whom there were some that would be glad of any occasion to reproach him, and prejudice the minds of others against him. To prevent any insinuations against him on account of what he had said, as if he intended to charge them with wronging him, or unjust accusations of him for having wronged them, he assureth them again of his great affections to them, inasmuch that he could spend his last breath at Corinth, and *live and die with them*, if his business with other churches, and his work as an apostle, which was not to be confined to one place only, would permit him to do so. And he addeth, it was his great affection to them that made him use such *boldness* or *freedom of speech towards them*, and caused him to *glory*, or make his boasts of them in all places and upon all occasions, being *filled with comfort, and exceeding joyful in all their tribulations*.

5. For when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without *were* fightings, within *were* fears. 6. Nevertheless, God that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus: 7. And not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoiced the more. 8. For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle made you sorry, though *it were* but for a season. 9. Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. 10. For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. 11. For behold, this self-same thing that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea *what* clearing of your selves?

selves, yea, *what* indignation, yea, *what* fear, yea, *what* vehement desire, yea, *what* zeal, yea, *what* revenge! In all things ye have approved your selves to be clear in this matter.

There seemeth to be a connexion between *chap. ii. 13.* (where the apostle said he had *no rest in his spirit* when he found not Titus at Troas) and the fifth verse of this chapter: and so great was his affection to the Corinthians, and his concern about their behaviour in relation to the incestuous person, that in his further travels he still had no rest till he heard from them. And now he tells them,

(1.) *How he was distressed*, ver. 5. He was troubled when he did not meet with Titus at Troas, and afterwards when for some time he did not meet with him in Macedonia: this was a grief to him, because he could not hear what reception he met with at Corinth, or how their affairs went forward. And besides this, they met with other troubles, with incessant storms of persecutions; there were *fightings without*, or continual contentions with, and opposition from, Jews and Gentiles; and there were *fears within*, and great concern for such as had embraced the Christian faith, lest they should be corrupted or seduced, and give scandal to others, or be scandalized.

(2.) *How he was comforted*, ver. 6. 7. Where observe, 1. The very coming of Titus was some comfort to him. It was matter of joy to see him, whom he long desired and expected to meet with. The very coming of Titus, and his company, who was dear to him as his *own son in the common faith*, Tit. i. 4. was a great comfort to the apostle in his travels and troubles. But, 2. The good news which Titus brought concerning the Corinthians, was matter of greater consolation. He found Titus to be *comforted in them*, and this filled the apostle with comfort, especially when he acquainted him with their *earnest desire* to give good satisfaction in the things about which the apostle had writ to them; and of their *mourning* for the scandal that was found among them, and the great grief they had caused to others; and their *fervent mind* or great affections towards the apostle, who had dealt so faithfully with them in reproving their faults. So true is the observation of Solomon, *Prov. xxviii. 23. He that rebuketh a man, afterwards shall find more favour than he that flattereth with his tongue.*

3. He ascribeth all his comfort to God as the author. It was God that comforted him by the coming of Titus, even the God of all comfort, *God that comforteth them that are cast down*, ver. 6. Note, We should look above and beyond all means and instruments unto God, as the author of all our consolation and the good that we enjoy.

(3.) How greatly he was rejoiced at their repentance, and the evidences thereof. The apostle was sorry that he had grieved them, that some pious persons among them laid to heart very greatly what he said in his former epistle, or that it was needful he should make them sorry, whom he had rather have made glad, ver. 8. But now he rejoiced when he found they had *sorrowed to repentance*, ver. 9. Their sorrow in itself was not the cause of his rejoicing; but the nature of it, and the effect of it, *viz. Repentance unto salvation*, ver. 10. made him rejoice; for now it appeared that they had received damage by him in nothing, their sorrow was *but for a season*, it was turned into joy, and that joy was durable. Observe here,

1. The antecedent of true repentance is *godly sorrow*, that *worketh* repentance. It is not repentance itself, but it is a good preparation to repentance, and in some sense the *cause* that produceth repentance. The offender had great sorrow, he was in danger of being *swallowed up with overmuch sorrow*; and the society was greatly sorrowful, which before was *puffed up*: and this sorrow of theirs was after a *godly manner*, or according to God, (as it is in the original) *i. e.* it was according to the will of God, and tending to the glory of God, and wrought by the Spirit of God. It was a godly sorrow, because a sorrow for sin, as an offence against God, an instance of ingratitude, and a forfeiture of God's favour. There is a great difference between this sorrow of a godly sort, and the *sorrow of this world*. Godly sorrow produceth repentance and reformation, and will end in salvation; but worldly sorrow *worketh death*. The sorrows of worldly men for worldly things will bring down grey hairs the sooner to the grave; and such a sorrow even for sin as Judas had will have fatal consequences, as his had, which wrought death. Note, 1. That repentance will be attended with salvation. Therefore, 2. True penitents will never repent that they have repented, nor of any thing that was conducive thereto. 3. Humiliation and godly sorrow is previously necessary in order to repentance, and both of them are from God the giver of all grace.

2. The happy fruits and consequences of true repentance are mentioned, ver. 11. and those *fruits that are meet for repentance*, are the best evidences of it; and where the heart is changed, the life and actions will be changed too. The Corinthians made it evident their sort was a *godly sorrow*, and such as *wrought repentance*, because it wrought in them great *carefulness* about their souls, and to avoid sin, and please God; it wrought also a *clearing of themselves*, not by insisting upon their own justification before God, especially whilst they persisted in their sin, but en-

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deavours to put away the accursed thing, and so free themselves from the just imputation of approving the evil that had been done. It wrought *indignation* at sin, at themselves, at the tempter, and his instruments; it wrought *fear*, a fear of reverence, a fear of watchfulness, and a fear of distrust; not a distrust of God; but of themselves; an awful fear of God, a cautious fear of sin, and a jealous fear of themselves. It wrought *vehement desire* after a thorough reformation of what had been amiss, and of reconciliation with God whom they had offended. It wrought *zeal*, a mixture of love and anger, a zeal for duty, and against sin. It wrought, lastly, *revenge* against sin and their own folly, by endeavours to make all due satisfaction for injuries that might be done thereby. And thus *in all things had they approved themselves to be clear in that matter*. Not that they were innocent, but that they were penitent, and therefore clear of guilt before God who would pardon and not punish them; and they ought no longer to be reproved, much less to be reproached, by men, for what they had truly repented of.

12. Wherefore though I wrote unto you, *I did it* not for his cause that had done the wrong, nor for his cause that suffered wrong, but that our care for you in the sight of God might appear unto you. 13. Therefore we were comforted in your comfort: yea, and exceedingly the more joyed we for the joy of Titus, because his spirit was refreshed by you all. 14. For if I have boasted any thing to him of you, I am not ashamed; but as we spake all things to you in truth, even so our boasting which *I made* before Titus is found a truth. 15. And his inward affection is more abundant toward you, whilst he remembreth the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling you received him. 16. I rejoice therefore that I have confidence in you in all things.

In these verses the apostle endeavoureth to comfort the Corinthians upon whom his admonitions had had so good effect. And in order thereto,

(1.) He tells them, he had a design in his former epistle, which might be thought severe, ver. 12. It was not chiefly *for his cause that did the wrong*, *i. e.* not only for his benefit, much less merely that he should be punished; nor yet was it only *for his cause that suffered wrong*, namely, the injured Father, and that he might have what satisfaction could be given him: but it was also to manifest his great and sincere concern and *care for them*, *i. e.* the whole church, lest that should suffer by letting such a crime, and the scandal thereof, remain among them without due remark and repentment.

(2.) He acquaints them with the joy of Titus as well as of himself, upon the account of their repentance and good behaviour. Titus was rejoiced, and his *spirit refreshed* with their comfort, and this comforted and rejoiced the apostle also, ver. 13. and as Titus was comforted whilst he was with them, so when he remembered his reception among them, expressing their *obedience* to the apostolical directions, and their *fear and trembling* at the reproofs that were given them, the thoughts of these things inflamed and increased his affections to them. ver. 15. Note, There is great comfort and joy that followeth upon godly sorrow. As sin occasions general grief, so repentance and reformation occasions general joy. Paul was glad, and Titus was glad, and the Corinthians were comforted, and the *penitent* ought to be comforted; and well may all this joy be on *earth*, when there is joy in *heaven* over one sinner that repenteth.

(3.) He concludeth this whole matter with expressing the entire confidence he had in them. *He was not ashamed of his boasting concerning them to Titus*, ver. 14. For he was not disappointed in his expectation concerning them, which he signified to Titus; and he could now with great joy declare what confidence he still had in them as to *all things*, that he did not doubt of their good behaviour for the time to come. Note, It is a great comfort and joy to a faithful minister, to have to do with a people that he can confide in, and that he hath reason to hope will comply with every thing he proposeth to them, that is for the glory of God, the credit of the gospel, and their advantage.

C H A P. VIII.

In this and the following chapter Paul is exhorting and directing the Corinthians about a particular work of charity, to relieve the necessities of the poor saints at Jerusalem and in Judea, according to the good example of the churches in Macedonia, Rom. xv. 26. The Christians at Jerusalem through war, famine, and persecution, were grown poor, many of them fallen into decay, and perhaps most of them were but poor when they first embraced Christianity, for Christ said, the poor receive the gospel. Now Paul, though he was the apostle of the Gentiles, had a tender regard and kind concern for those among the Jews that were converted to the Christian faith; and though many of them had not so much

much affection to the Gentile converts as they ought to have, yet the apostle would have the Gentiles to be kind to them, and stirred them up to contribute liberally for their relief. Upon this subject he is very large and copious, and writeth very affectingly. In this eighth chapter he acquainteth the Corinthians with, and commendeth, the good example of the Macedonians in this work of charity, and that Titus was sent to Corinth to collect their bounty, ver. 1—6. He then proceedeth to urge this duty with several cogent arguments, ver. 7—15. and commendeth the persons that were employed in this affair, ver. 16—24.

MOREOVER brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: 2. How that in a great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy, and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. 3. For to *their power* (I bear record) yea, and beyond their power, *they were* willing of themselves, 4. Praying us with much intreaty, that we would receive the gift, and *take upon us* the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. 5. And *this they did*, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God. 6. Inasmuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also.

Observe here,

(1.) The apostle taketh occasion from the good example of the churches of Macedonia, *i. e.* of Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, and others in the region of Macedonia, to exhort the Corinthians and the Christians in Achaia to the good work of charity. And,

First, He acquainteth them with their great liberality; which *he calleth the grace of God bestowed on the churches*, ver. 1. Some think the words should be rendered, the *gift of God* given in or by the churches. He certainly meaneth the charitable gifts of these churches, which are called the *grace or gifts of God*, either because they were very large, or rather because their charity to the poor saints did proceed from God as the author, and was accompanied with true love to God, which also was manifested this way. And the *grace of God* must be owned as the root and fountain of all the good that is in us, or *done by us* at any time; and it is great grace and favour from God, and *bestowed on us*, if we are made useful to others, and are forward to any good work.

Secondly, He commendeth the charity of the Macedonians, and sets it forth with good advantage. He tells them,

1. They were but in a low condition, and themselves in distress, yet they contributed to the relief of others. *They were in great tribulation and deep poverty*, ver. 2. It was a time of great affliction with them, as may be seen, *Acts* xvi, and xvii. The Christians in these parts met with ill treatment, which had reduced them to *deep poverty*; yet as they had *abundance of joy* in the midst of tribulation, they abounded in their liberality; they gave out of a little, trusting in God to provide for them, and make it up to them.

2. They gave very largely, with *the riches of liberality*, ver. 2. *i. e.* as liberally as if they had been rich. It was a large contribution they made, all things considered; it was *according to*, yea *beyond, their power*, ver. 3. as much, if not more, than could well be expected from them. Note, That though men may condemn indiscretion, yet God will accept the pious zeal of those that in real works of piety and charity do rather beyond their power.

3. They were very ready and forward to this good work. *They were willing of themselves*, ver. 3. and were so far from needing that Paul should urge and press them with many arguments, that they *prayed him with much intreaty to receive the gift*, ver. 4. It seemeth that Paul was backward to undertake this trust, for *he would give himself to the word and prayer*; or, it may be, he was apprehensive how ready his enemies would be to reproach and blacken him upon all occasions, and might take a handle against him upon account of so large a sum deposited in his hands, to suspect or accuse him of indiscretion and partiality in the distribution, if not of some injustice. Note, How cautious ministers should be, especially in money-matters, not to give occasion to them that seek occasion to speak reproachfully.

4. Their charity was founded in true piety, and this was the great commendation of it: they performed this good work in a right method, *first they gave themselves to the Lord, and then they gave unto us* their contributions, *by the will of God*, ver. 5. *i. e.* according as it was the will of God they should do, or to be disposed of as the will of God should be, and for his glory. This, it seemeth, exceeded the expectation of the apostle, it was more than he *hoped for*, to see such warm and pious affections shining in these Macedonians, and this good work performed with so much devotion and solemnity. They solemnly, jointly, and unanimously made a fresh surrender of themselves, and all they had unto the Lord Jesus Christ. They had done this before, and now they do it again upon this occasion; sanctifying their contribu-

tions to do God's honour, by first giving themselves to the Lord. Note, 1. We should give ourselves to God. We cannot bestow ourselves better. 2. When we give ourselves to the Lord, we then give him all we have, to be called for and disposed of according to his will. 3. Whatever we use, or lay out for God, it is only giving to him what is his own. 4. All we give or bestow for charitable uses, will not be accepted of God, or turn to our advantage, unless we first give ourselves to the Lord.

(2.) The apostle tells them Titus was desired to go and make a collection among them, ver. 6. and Titus, he knew, would be an acceptable person to them. He had met with a kind reception among them formerly; they had shewn good affection to him, and he had a great love for them: Besides, Titus had already *begun* this work among them, therefore he was desired to *finish* it. So that he was on all accounts a proper person to be employed; and when so good a work had already prospered in so good a hand, it would be pity if it should not proceed and be finished. Note, It is an instance of wisdom, to use proper instruments in a work we desire to do well; and the work of charity will often succeed the best, when the most proper persons are employed to ask for it, and dispose of it.

7. Therefore as ye abound in every thing, in faith, in utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us; *see* that ye abound in this grace also. 8. I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love. 9. For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich. 10. And herein I give *my advice*: for this is expedient for you who have begun before, not only to do, but also to be forward a year ago. 11. Now therefore perform the doing of it; that as *there was* a readiness to will, so *there may be* a performance also out of that which you have. 12. For if there be first a willing mind, *it is* accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not. 13. For *I mean* not that other men be eased, and you burdened: 14. But by an equality, *that* now at this time your abundance *may be a supply* for their want, that their abundance also may be *a supply* for your want, that there may be equality, 15. As it is written, He that *had gathered much*, had nothing over; and he that *had gathered little*, had no lack.

In these verses the apostle useth several cogent arguments to stir up the Corinthians to this good work of charity.

(1.) He urgeth upon them the consideration of their eminence in other gifts and graces, and would have them excel in this of charity also, ver. 7. There is great address and holy art here used by the apostle, when he would persuade the Corinthians to *this* good thing. He commendeth them for *other* good things that were found in them. Most people love to be spoken fair, especially when we ask a gift of them for ourselves, or others; and it is a justice we owe to those in whom God's grace doth shine, to give them their due commendation. Observe here what it was the Corinthians abounded in: *Faith* is mentioned first, for that is the root; and as *without faith it is impossible to please God*, Heb. xi. 6. so they that do abound in faith, will abound in other graces and good works also; and this will work and shew itself *by love*. To their faith was added *utterance*, which is an excellent gift, and redounds much to the glory of God, and the good of the church. Many have faith that want utterance. But these Corinthians excelled most churches in spiritual gifts, and particularly in utterance; and yet this was not in them, as in too many, both the effect and evidence of ignorance: For with their utterance there appeared *knowledge*, abundance of knowledge. They had a treasury of things new and old, and in their utterance they brought out of this treasury. They abounded also in *all diligence*. Oftentimes those who have great knowledge and ready utterance, are not the most diligent Christians. Great talkers are not always the best doers; but these Corinthians were diligent to do, as well as know, and talk well. And further, they had abundant *love to their ministers*; and were not like too many, that having gifts of their own, are but too apt to slight their ministers, and neglect them. Now to all these good things the apostle desireth them to add *this grace also*, to abound in charity to the poor; that where so much good was found, there should be found yet more good.

Before the apostle proceedeth to another argument, he taketh care to prevent any misapprehensions of his design to impose on them, or to bind heavy burdens upon them by his authority; and tells them, ver. 8. he did not speak *by commandment*, or in a way of authority, I give *my advice*, ver. 10. He took occasion from the *forwardness of others*, to propose what would be *expedient for them*, and would prove the *sincerity of their love*, or be the genuine effect and evidence thereof. Note, A great difference should be made

made between plain and positive duty, and the improvement of a present opportunity of doing or getting good. Many a thing which is good for us to do, yet cannot be said to be by express and indispensable commandment, our duty at this or that time.

(2.) Another argument is taken from the consideration of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. And the best arguments for Christian duties, are those that are taken from the love of Christ, *that constraineth us*. The example of the churches of Macedonia was such as the Corinthians should imitate: But the example of our Lord Jesus Christ should have much greater influence. And *ye know*, saith the apostle, *the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ*, ver. 8. *that though he was rich*, as being God, equal in power and glory with the Father, rich in all the glory and blessedness of the upper world, *yet for your sakes he became poor*; not only did become *man* for us, but he became *poor* also. He was born in poor circumstances, lived a poor life, and died in poverty; and this was for our sakes, that *we* thereby might *be made rich*; rich in the love and favour of God; rich in the blessings and promises of the new covenant; rich in the hopes of eternal life, being heirs of the kingdom. This is a good reason why we should be charitable to the poor out of what we have, because we ourselves live upon the charity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

(3.) Another argument is taken from their good purposes, and their forwardness to begin this good work. As to this, he telleth them,

1. It was expedient for them to perform what they purposed, and finish what they had begun, ver. 10, 11. What else did their good purposes and good beginnings signify? Good purposes, indeed, are good things; they are like buds and blossoms, pleasant to behold, and give hopes of good fruit, but they are lost, and signify nothing without performances. So good beginnings are amiable, but we shall lose the benefit unless there be perseverance, and we bring forth *fruit to perfection*. Seeing therefore the Corinthians had shewed a *readiness to will*, he would have them be careful also in the *performance*, according to their ability. For,

2. This would be acceptable to God. *This willing mind is accepted*, ver. 12. when accompanied with sincere endeavours. When men do purpose that which is good, and endeavour according to their ability to perform also, God will accept of what they have, or can do, and not reject them for what they have not, and is not in their power to do: and this is true as to other things, besides the work of charity. But let us note here, this scripture will by no means justify those that think good meanings are enough, or that good purposes, and the profession of a willing mind, is sufficient to save them. It is accepted indeed, where there is a performance as far as we are able, and when providence doth hinder the performance, as in David's case concerning building a house for the Lord, 2 Sam. vii.

(4.) Another argument is taken from the discrimination which divine providence doth make, in the distribution of the things of this world, and the mutability of human affairs, ver. 13, 14, 15. The force of the arguing seemeth to be this: Providence giveth to some more of the good things of this world, and to some less, and that with this design, that those who have a greater *abundance might supply them that are in want*, that there might be room for charity. And further, considering the mutability of human affairs, and how soon there may be an alteration, so that those who now have an abundance, may stand in need of being supplied themselves in their wants; this should induce them to be charitable whilst they are able. It is the will of God, by our mutual supplying one another, there should be *some sort of equality*; not an *absolute* equality indeed, or such a *levelling* as would destroy property, for in such a case there could be no exercise of charity. But as in works of charity there should be an equitable proportion observed, that the burden should not lie too heavy on some, while others are wholly eased; so all should think themselves concerned to supply them that are in want. This is illustrated by the instance of gathering and distributing *manna* in the wilderness, concerning which, as we may read *Exod. xvi.* it was the duty of every family, and all in the family, to gather what they could, which when it was gathered, was put into some common receptacle for each family, from whence the master of the family distributed to every one as he had occasion; to some more than they were able, through age and infirmity, to gather up; to others less than they gathered, because they did not need so much: and thus *he that had gathered much*, (i. e. more than he had occasion for) had nothing over, when a communication was made to him *that had gathered little*, who by this method had no lack. Note, Such is the condition of men in this world, that we mutually depend on one another, and should help one another; and those who have never so much of this world, have no more than food and raiment; and they who have but a little of this world, seldom want that; nor indeed should those who have abundance suffer others to want, but be ready to afford supply.

16. But thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you. 17. For indeed he accepted the exhortation, but being more forward, of his own accord he went unto you. 18. And we have sent with him the brother, whose praise is in the

gospel, throughout all the churches: 19. (And not *that* only, but who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord, and *declaration of your ready mind*) 20. Avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this abundance, which is administered by us; 21. Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men. 22. And we have sent with them our brother, whom we have oftentimes proved diligent in many things, but now much more diligent, upon the great confidence which *I have* in you. 23. Whether *any do enquire of Titus*, *he is my partner*, and fellow-helper concerning you: or our brethren *be enquired of*, *they are the messengers of the churches*, and the glory of Christ. 24. Wherefore shew ye to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love, and of our boasting on your behalf.

In these verses the apostle commendeth the brethren that were sent to them to collect their charity, and, as it were, giveth them letters credential, that if they *were enquired after*, ver. 23. i. e. if any should be inquisitive or suspicious concerning them, it might be known who they were, and how safely they might be trusted.

1. He commendeth Titus, 1. For his *earnest care* and *great concern* of heart for them, and desire in all things to promote their welfare. This is mentioned with thankfulness to God, ver. 16. and it is cause of thankfulness if God hath *put into the hearts* of any to do us, or others, any good. 2. For his readiness to this present service. He *accepted* of the office, and was *forward* to go upon this good errand, ver. 17. Asking of charity for the relief of others, is by many looked upon as a thankless office, yet it is a good office, and what we should not be shy of when we are called to it.

2. He commendeth *another brother*, who was sent with Titus. It is generally thought this was Luke. He is commended, 1. As a man whose *praise was in the gospel through all the churches*, ver. 18. His ministerial services of several kinds were well known, and he had approved himself praise-worthy in what he had done. 2. As one chosen of the churches, ver. 19. and joined with the apostle in his ministration. This was done, it is most likely, at the motion and request of Paul himself, for this reason, *that no man might blame him in that abundance which was administered by him*, ver. 19. So cautious was the apostle to avoid all occasions that evil-minded men might lay hold on to blacken him. He would not give occasion to any to accuse him of injustice or partiality in this affair; and thought it to be his duty, as it is the duty of all Christians, *to provide for things honest, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men*; i. e. to act so prudently as to prevent, as far as we can, all unjust suspicions concerning us, and all occasions of scandalous imputations. Note, We live in a censorious world, and should cut off occasion from them that seek occasion to speak reproachfully. It is the crime of others, if they reproach or censure us without occasion; and it is our imprudence, at least, if we give them any *occasion*, when there may not be a just *cause* for them so to do.

3. He commended also *another brother* that was joined with the two former in this affair. This brother is thought to be Apollos. Whoever he was, he had *approved himself diligent in many things*; and therefore was fit to be employed in this affair. Moreover he had a great desire to this work, because of the *confidence*, or good opinion, he had of the Corinthians, ver. 22. and it is a great comfort to see those employed in good works, that have formerly approved themselves diligent.

4. He concludeth this point with a general good character of them all, ver. 23. as *fellow-labourers with him* for their welfare; as the *messengers of the churches*; as the *glory of Christ*, i. e. who were to him for a name and a praise, who brought glory to Christ as instruments, and had obtained honour from Christ to be counted faithful, and employed in his service.

Wherefore upon the whole, he exhorteth them to shew their liberality, answerable to the great expectation others had concerning them at this time; that these messengers of the churches, and the churches themselves, might see a full *proof of their love* to God, and to their afflicted brethren, and that it was with good reason the apostle had even *boasted on their behalf*, ver. 24. Note, That others good opinion of us should be an argument with us to do well.

C H A P. IX.

In this chapter the apostle seemeth to excuse his earnestness in pressing the Corinthians to the duty of charity, ver. 1—5. And proceedeth to give directions about the acceptable way and manner of performing it, viz. bountifully, deliberately, and freely; and giveth good encouragements for so doing, ver. 6, ad fin.

1. **F**OR as touching the ministring to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you. 2. For I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many. 3. Yet have I sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this behalf; that, as I said, ye may be ready: 4. Lest haply if they of Macedonia come with me, and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, you) should be ashamed in this same confident boasting. 5. Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make up before hand your bounty, whereof ye had notice before, that the same might be ready as a *matter of bounty*, and not as of covetousness.

In these verses the apostle speaketh very respectfully to the Corinthians, and with great skill; and while he seemeth to excuse his urging them so earnestly to charity, doth still press them thereto, and sheweth how much his heart was set upon this matter.

(1.) He tells them it was needless to press them with further arguments to afford relief to their poor brethren, *ver. 1.* being satisfied, he had said enough already to prevail with them, of whom he had so good an opinion. For, 1. *He knew their forwardness* to every good work, and how they had begun this good work *a year ago*. Inasmuch, that, 2. He had boasted of *their zeal* to the Macedonians, and this *had provoked many* of them to do as they had done. Wherefore he was persuaded, that as they had begun well, they would go on well; and so commending them for what they had done, he lays an obligation on them to proceed and persevere.

(2.) He seemeth to apologize for sending Titus and the other brethren to them. He is unwilling they should be offended at him for this, as if he was too earnest, and pressed too hard upon them, and tells the true reasons why he sent them. Namely,

1. That having this timely notice, they might be fully *ready*, *ver. 3.* and not surprized with hasty demands, when he should come to them: and when we would have others to do that which is good, we must act towards them prudently and tenderly, and give them time.

2. That he might not be ashamed of his boasting concerning them, if they should be found unready, *ver. 3.* 4. He intimateth, that some from Macedonia might *haply come with him*: and if the collection should not then be made, this would make him, not say them, ashamed, considering the boasting of the apostle concerning them. Thus careful was he to preserve their reputation and his own. Note, Christians should consult the reputation of their profession, and endeavour to *adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour*.

6. But this *I say*, He which soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly: and he which soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully. 7. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, *so let him give*; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. 8. And God is able to make all grace abound towards you; that ye always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work: 9. (As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever. 10. Now he that minisreth seed to the sower, both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness) 11: Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God. 12. For the administration of this service, not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God; 13. (Whiles by the experiment of this ministration, they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men) 14. And by their prayer for you, which long after you, for the exceeding grace of God in you. 15. Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.

Here we have,

First, Proper directions to be observed about the right and acceptable manner of bestowing charity; and it is of great concernment, that we do *what is required*, *so* as is commanded. Now, as to the manner in which the apostle would have the Corinthians give, observe,

(1.) It should be *bountifully*; this was intimated, *ver. 5.* that a liberal contribution was expected, a matter of *bounty*, not what favoured of *covetousness*, and he offereth to their consideration that

men who expect a good return at harvest, do not use to pinch and spare in sowing their seed, for the return usually is proportionable to what they sow, *ver. 6.*

2. It should be *deliberately*. Every man, according as he purposeth in his heart, *ver. 7.* Works of charity, like other good works, should be done with thought and design, whereas, some do good only by accident; they comply, it may be hastily, with the importunity of others, without any good design, and give more than they intended, and then repent of it afterwards, or possibly had they duly considered all things they would have given more. Due deliberation, as to this matter of our own circumstances, and those of them we are about to relieve, will be very helpful to direct us how liberal we should be in our contributions for charitable uses.

(3.) It should be *freely*, whatever we give, be it more or less: not grudgingly, or of necessity, but cheerfully, *ver. 7.* Persons sometimes will give merely to satisfy the importunity of those that ask their charity, and what they give is in a manner squeezed or forced from them, and this unwillingness spoileth all they do. We ought to give more freely, than the modesty of some necessitous persons will allow them to ask: we should not only deal out bread, but *draw out our souls* to the hungry, *Isa. lviii. 10.* We should give liberally with an *open hand*, and cheerfully with an *open countenance*; being glad we have ability, and an opportunity to be charitable.

Secondly, Good encouragement to perform this work of charity in the manner thus directed to, *e. g.* Here the apostle tells the Corinthians,

(1.) They themselves would be *no losers*, by what they gave in charity. This may serve to obviate a secret objection in the minds of many against this good work, who are ready to think they may want what they give away: But such should consider, what is given to the poor in a right manner, is far from being lost; as the precious seed which is cast into the ground, is not lost, though it is buried there for a time; for it will spring up, and bear fruit, the sower shall receive it again with increase, *ver. 6.* Such good returns may they expect, that give freely and liberally in charity. For,

1. God loveth a cheerful giver, *ver. 7.* and what may not they hope to receive, who are the objects of the divine love? Can a man be a loser, by doing that with which God is pleased? May not such an one be sure he shall some way or other be a gainer? Nay, is not the love and favour of God better than all other things, *better than life itself*?

2. God is able to make our charity redound to our advantage, *ver. 8.* We have no reason to distrust the *goodness* of God, and to be sure we have no reason to question his *power*; he is *able to make all grace abound* towards us, and to abound in us; to give a large increase of spiritual and temporal good things. He can make us to have a *sufficiency* in all things; to be content with what we have; to make up what we give; to make us able to give yet more; as it is written, *Psal. cxii. 9.* concerning the charitable man, *He hath dispersed abroad: He hath given to the poor: His righteousness, i. e. his almsgiving, endureth for ever.* The honour of it is lasting, the reward of it eternal, and he is still able to live comfortably himself, and give liberally to others.

3. The apostle puts up a prayer to God on their behalf, that they might be gainers and not losers, *ver. 10, 11.* Where observe, 1. *To whom* the prayer is made, *viz.* unto God, *who minisreth seed to the sower*, i. e. who by his providence giveth such an increase of the fruits of the earth, that we have not only bread sufficient to eat for one year, but enough to sow again for a future supply; or thus, It is God that giveth us not only a competency for ourselves, but that also wherewith we may supply the wants of others, and so should be as seed to be sown. 2. *For what* he prayeth, and there are several things he desireth for them, *viz.* that they may have *bread for their food*, i. e. always a good competency for themselves, *food convenient*; that God would *multiply their seed sown*, i. e. that they might still be able to do more good; and that there might be *an increase of the fruits of righteousness*, i. e. that they might reap plentifully, and have the best and most ample returns of their charity; so as to be *enriched in every thing to all bountifulness*, *ver. 11.* that upon the whole they may find it true they shall be no losers, but great gainers. Note, Works of charity are so far from impoverishing us, they are the proper means truly to enrich us, or make us truly rich.

(2.) The poor distressed saints would be *gainers*, as they would be no losers: for this service would *supply their wants*, *ver. 12.* If we have reason to think them to be *saints*, whom we believe to be of the *household of faith*, whose wants are great; how ready should we be to do them good? Our goodness cannot extend unto God, but we should freely extend it to these *excellent ones of the earth*, and thus shew that we delight in them.

(3.) This would redound to the praise and glory of God. Many thanksgivings would be given to God on this account; by the apostle, and by them that were employed in this ministration, *ver. 11.* These would bless God, who had made them happy instruments in so good a work, and made them successful in it. Besides these, *others* also would be thankful, the poor that were supplied in their wants, would not fail to be very thankful to God, and

and blefs God for them; and all that wifhed well to the gospel, would *glorify God for this experiment*, or proof of *subjection to the gospel of Chrift*, and true love to all men, ver. 11. Note, 1. True Christianity is a subjection to the gospel, a yielding ourselves to the commanding influence of its truths and laws.

2. We must evidence the fincerity of our subjection to the gospel, by works of charity.

3. This will be for the credit of our profession, and to the praise and glory of God.

4. Those whose wants were fupplied would make the beft returns they were able, by fending up many prayers to God for thofe who had relieved them, ver. 14. And thus fhould we recompense the kindneffes we receive, when we are not in a capacity of recompensing them any other way; and as this is the only recompence the poor can make, fo it is many times greatly for the advantage of the rich.

Laftly, The apoftle concludeth this whole matter with this doxology, *Thanks be to God for his unfpeakable gift*, ver. 15. Some think, by this unfpeakable gift he meaneth the gift of grace beftowed on the churches, in making them able and willing to fupply the neceffities of the faints, which would be attended with unfpeakable benefits both to the givers and receivers. It fhould feem rather, that he meaneth *Jesus Chrift*, who is indeed the *unfpeakable gift of God* unto this world: A gift we have all reafon to be very thankful for.

CHAP. X.

There was no place in which the apoftle Paul met with more oppofition from falfe apoftles than at Corinth; he had many enemies there: Let not any of the minifters of Chrift think ftrange, if they meet with perils not only from enemies, but from falfe brethren, for bleffed Paul himfelf did fo. Though he was fo blamelefs and inoffenfive in all his carriage, fo condefcending and ufeul to all, yet there were thofe that bore him ill-will, that envied him, and did all they could to undermine him, and leffen his intereft and reputation. Therefore he vindicateth himfelf from their imputations, and armeth the Corinthians againft their infinuations. In this chapter the apoftle, in a mild and humble manner, afferteth the power of his preaching, and to punifh offenders, ver. 1—6. He then proceedeth to reafon the cafe with the Corinthians, afferting his relation to Chrift, and his authority as an apoftle of Chrift, ver. 7—11. And refufeth to juftify himfelf, or to act by fuch rules as the falfe teachers did, but according to the better rules he had fixed for himfelf, ver. 12, ad fin.

1. **N**OW I Paul my felf befeech you, by the meeknefs and gentlenefs of Chrift, who in preface *am* bafe among you, but being abfent *am* bold toward you. 2. But I befeech you, that I may not be bold when I am prefent, with that confidence wherewith I think to be bold againft fome which think of us, as if we walked according to the flefh. 3. For though we walk in the flefh, we do not war after the flefh: 4. (For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down of ftrong holds) 5. Cafting down imaginations, and every high thing that exaleth itfelf againft the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Chrift: 6. And having in a readinefs to revenge all difobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

Here we may obferve,

(1.) The mild and humble manner in which the bleffed apoftle addreffeth the Corinthians, and how defirous he is, that no occafion might be given him to ufe feverity.

1. He addreffeth himfelf in a very mild and humble manner: *I Paul myfelf befeech you*, ver. 1. We find in the introduction to this epiftle, he joined Timothy with himfelf, but now he fpeaketh only for himfelf, againft whom the falfe apoftles had particularly levelled their reproaches; yet in the midft of the greateft provocations he fhewed humility and mildnefs, from the confideration of the *meeknefs and gentlenefs of Chrift*, and defireth this great example might have the fame influence on the Corinthians. Note, When we find ourfelves tempted or inclined to be rough and fevere towards any body, we fhould think on the meeknefs and gentlenefs of Chrift, that appeared in him, in the days of his flefh, in the design of his undertaking, and in all the acts of his grace towards poor fouls. How humbly alfo doth this great apoftle fpeak of himfelf, as *one in preface bafe among them*! So his enemies fpeak of him with contempt, and this he feemeth to acknowledge; whilft others thought meanly, and fpake scornfully of him, he had low thoughts of himfelf, and fpake humbly of himfelf. Note, We fhould be fenfible of our own infirmities, and think humbly of ourfelves, even when men reproach us for them.

No cix.

2. He is defirous, that no occafion might be given to ufe feverity; ver. 2. *He befeecheth them* to give no occafion for him to be bold, or exercife his authority againft them in general, as he had refolved to do againft fome, that unjuftly charged him *as walking according to the flefh*, i. e. of regulating his conduct even in his minifterial aétings, according to carnal policy, or with worldly views: This was what the apoftle had renounced, and this is contrary to the fpirit and design of the gospel, and was far from being the aim and design of the apoftle. Hereupon,

(2.) He afferteth the power of his preaching, and to punifh offenders.

1. The power of *his preaching*, ver. 3, 4, 5. Where obferve, (1.) The work of the miniftry is a warfare, not *after the flefh* indeed, for it is a fpiritual warfare, with fpiritual enemies, and for fpiritual purpofes. And though minifters do *walk in the flefh*, or live in the body, and in the common affairs of life do act as other men, yet in their work and *warfare* they muft not go by the maxims of the flefh, nor fhould they design to pleafe the flefh. That muft be crucified with its affections and lufts: It muft be mortified and kept under. (2.) The doctrines of the gospel and difcipline of the church are the *weapons* of this warfare; and thefe are not *carnal*: Outward force therefore is not the method of the gospel, but ftrong perfuafions by the power of truth, and the meeknefs of wifdom. A good argument this is againft perfecution for confcience-fake; confcience is accountable to God only, and people muft be *perfswaded* to God and their duty, not *driven* by force of arms. And fo the weapons of our warfare *are* mighty, or very powerful; the evidence of truth is convincing and cogent; this indeed is *through God*, or owing unto him, becaufe they are his institutions, and accompanied with his bleffing, which maketh all oppofition to fall before his victorious gospel. Where we may obferve, 1. What oppofition is made againft the gospel, by the powers of fin and Satan in the hearts of men; ignorance, prejudices, beloved lufts are Satan's *ftrong holds* in the fouls of fome; vain imaginations, carnal reasonings, and high thoughts or proud conceits in others *do exalt themfelves againft the knowledge of God*, i. e. by thefe ways the devil endeavours to keep men from faith and obedience to the gospel, and fecureth his poffeffion of the hearts of men, as his own houfe or property. But then obferve, 2. The conqueft which the word of God doth gain. Thefe ftrong holds are *pulled down*, by the gospel as the means, through the grace and power of God accompanying it as the principal efficient caufe. Note, The converfion of the foul, is the conqueft of Satan in that foul.

2. The apoftle's power to *punifh offenders* (and that in an extraordinary manner) is afferted in ver. 6. The apoftle was a prime minifter in the kingdom of Chrift, and chief officer in his army, and *had in readinefs*, i. e. he had power and authority at hand, to *revenge all difobedience*, i. e. to punifh offenders in a moft exemplary and extraordinary manner. The apoftle fpeaketh not of *personal* revenge, but of punifhing difobedience to the gospel, and diforderly walking, among church-members, by inflicting church-cenfures. Note, Though the apoftle fhewed meeknefs and gentlenefs, yet he would not betray his authority; and therefore intimateth, that when he would commend them whose obedience was *fulfilled* or manifested, others would fall under fevere cenfures.

7. Do ye look on things after the outward appearance? if any man truft to himfelf, that he is Chrifts, let him of himfelf think this again, that as he *is* Chrifts, even fo *are* we Chrifts. 8. For though I fhould boaft fomewhat more of our authority, (which the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for your deftruction) I fhould not be afhamed: 9. That I may not feem as if I would terrify you by letters. 10. For *his* letters (fay they) *are* weighty and powerful, but *his* bodily preface *is* weak, and *his* fpeech contemptible. 11. Let fuch an one think this, that fuch as we are in word by letters, when we are abfent, fuch *will we be* alfo in deed when we are prefent.

In thefe verfes the apoftle proceedeth to reafon the cafe with the Corinthians, in oppofition to thofe who defpifed him, judged him, and fpake hardly of him. *Do ye* (faith he) *look on things after the outward appearance*? ver. 7. Is this a fit meafure or rule to make an eftimate of things or perfons by, and to judge between me and my adverfaries? In outward appearance, Paul was mean and defpicable with fome; he did not make a figure as perhaps fome of his competitors might do: but this was a falfe rule to make a judgment by. It fhould feem, that fome boafled mighty things of themfelves, and made a fair fhew, but there are falfe appearances many times: a man may feem to be learned, that hath not learned Chrift, and appear virtuous, that hath not a principle of grace in his heart. However, the apoftle afferteth two things of himfelf.

(1.) His *relation to Chrift*. *If any man truft to himfelf that he is Chrift's, even fo are we Chrift's*, ver. 7. It fhould feem by this, that Paul's adverfaries boafled of their relation to Chrift,

as his ministers and servants. Now the apostle reasoneth thus with the Corinthians: Suppose it to be so, allowing what they say to be true, (and let us observe, that in fair arguing, we should allow all that may be reasonably granted; and should not think it impossible, but those who differ from us very much may yet belong to Christ, as well as we) allowing them (might the apostle say) what they boast of, yet they ought also to allow this to us, that *we also are Christ's*. Note, 1. We must not by the most charitable allowances we make to others that differ from us, cut ourselves off from Christ, or deny our relation to him. For, 2. There is room in Christ for many, and those that differ much from one another, may yet be *one* in him. And it would go to heal the differences that are among Christians, if they would remember that how confident soever we may be, that we belong to Christ; yet at the same time we must allow, that they who differ from us may belong to Christ too; and therefore should be treated accordingly: We must not think we are *the people*, and that none belong to Christ but we. This we may plead for ourselves against those that judge us, and despise us, that how weak soever we are, yet as they are Christ's, so are we: We profess the *same faith*, we walk by the *same rule*, we build upon the *same foundation*, and hope for the *same inheritance*.

(2.) His authority from Christ as an apostle. This he had mentioned before, *ver. 6.* and now he tells them, he might speak of it again, and that with some sort of *boasting*, seeing it was a truth, that the *Lord hath given it to him*, and it was *more* than his adversaries could justly pretend to. It was to be sure what he should *not be ashamed of*, *ver. 8.* Concerning which, observe,

1. The nature of his authority; it was for *edification*, and *not for destruction*. This indeed is the end of all authority, civil and ecclesiastical, and was the end of that extraordinary authority which the apostles had, and of all church-discipline.

2. The caution with which he speaketh of his authority, professing his design was not to *terrify them* with big words, nor by *angry letters*, *ver. 9.* Thus he seemeth to obviate an objection, that might have been formed against him, *ver. 10.* But the apostle declareth he did not intend to frighten them that were obedient, nor did he write any thing in his letters, that he was not able to make good by deeds against the disobedient; and he would have his adversaries *know this*, *ver. 11.* that he would by the exercise of his apostolical power committed to him, make it appear to have a real efficacy.

12. For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare our selves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves amongst themselves are not wise. 13. But we will not boast of things without *our measure*, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you. 14. For we stretch not our selves beyond *our measure*, as though we reached not unto you; for we are come as far as to you also, in *preaching* the gospel of Christ: 15. Not boasting of things without *our measure*, *that is*, of other mens labours; but having hope when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly, 16. To preach the gospel in the *regions* beyond you, and not to boast in another mans line of things made ready to our hand. 17. But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. 18. For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth.

In these verses observe,

(1.) The apostle refuseth to justify himself, or to act by such rules as the false apostles did, *ver. 12.* He plainly intimateth they took a wrong method to commend themselves, in *measuring themselves by themselves*, and *comparing themselves among themselves*, which was *not wise*. They were pleased, and did pride themselves in their own attainments, and never considered those that far exceeded them in gifts and graces, in power and authority; and this made them haughty and insolent. Note, If we would compare ourselves with others that do excel us, this would be a good method to keep us humble; we should be pleased and thankful for what we have of gifts or graces, but never pride ourselves therein, as if there were none to be compared with us, or that do excel us. The apostle would not be of the number of such vain men; let us resolve we will not make ourselves of that number.

(2.) He fixeth a better rule for his conduct; namely, *not to boast of things without his measure*, which was the measure God had distributed to him, *ver. 12.* His meaning is, either that he would not boast of more gifts or graces, or power and authority, than God had really bestowed on him; or rather, that he would not act beyond his commission as to persons or things, nor go beyond the line prescribed to him; which he plainly intimateth the

false apostles did, while they *boasted of other mens labours*. The apostle's resolution was to keep within his own province, and that compass of ground which God had marked out for him. His commission as an apostle was to preach the gospel *every where*, especially among the Gentiles, and he was not confined to one place; yet he observed the directions of providence and the Holy Spirit, as to the particular places whither he went, or where he did abide.

(3.) He acted according to this rule. *We stretch not ourselves beyond our measure*, *ver. 14.* And particularly, he acted according to this rule in preaching at Corinth, and in the exercise of his apostolical authority there. For he came thither by divine direction, and there he converted many to Christianity; and therefore in *boasting* of them as his charge, he acted not contrary to his rule, he boasted not of *other mens labours*, *ver. 15.*

(4.) He declareth his success in observing this rule. His hope was, that their *faith was increased*, and that others *beyond them*, even in the remoter parts of Achaia, would embrace the gospel also; and in all this he exceeded not his commission, nor acted in *another man's line*.

(5.) He seemeth to check himself in this matter, as if he had spoken too much in his own praise. The unjust accusations and reflexions of his enemies had made it needful he should justify himself; and the wrong methods they took, gave him good occasion to mention the better rule he had observed: yet he is afraid of boasting, or taking any praise to himself, and therefore he mentioned two things which ought to be regarded, *viz. 1.* That *he that glorieth, should glory in the Lord*, *ver. 17.* If we are able to fix good rules for our conduct, or act by them, or have any good success in so doing; the praise and glory of all is owing unto God. Ministers in particular must be careful not to glory in their performances, but must give God the glory of their work, and the success thereof.

2. That *not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth*, *ver. 18.* Of all flattery, self-flattery is the worst, and self-applause is seldom any better than self-flattery and self-deceit; at the best, self-commendation is no praise, it is oftentimes as foolish and vain, as it is proud: Therefore instead of praising or commending ourselves, we should strive to approve ourselves to God, and his approbation will be our best commendation.

CHAP. XI.

In this chapter the apostle goes on with his discourse, in opposition to the false apostles that were very industrious to lessen his interest and reputation among the Corinthians, and had prevailed too much by their insinuations. First, he apologizeth for his going about to commend himself, and giveth the reason for what he did, *ver. 1—4.* Afterwards he mentioneth, in his own necessary vindication, his equality with the other apostles, and with the false apostles in this particular, of preaching the gospel to the Corinthians freely without wages, *ver. 5—15.* Then he maketh another preface to what he was about further to say in his own justification, *ver. 16—21.* And afterwards giveth a large account of his qualifications, labours, and sufferings, in which he exceeded the false apostles, *ver. 22, ad fin.*

1. **W**OULD to God you could bear with me a little in my folly; and indeed bear with me. 2. For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. 3. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. 4. For if he that cometh, preacheth another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him.

Here we may observe,

(1.) The apology the apostle maketh for going about to commend himself: He is loth to enter upon this subject of self-commendation. *Would to God you could bear with me a little in my folly*, *ver. 1.* He calleth this *folly*, because too often it is really no better, in his case it was necessary; yet seeing others might apprehend it to be folly in him, he desireth them to bear with it. Note, As much against the grain as it is with a proud man to acknowledge his infirmities, so much is it against the grain with a humble man to speak in his own praise. It is no pleasure to a good man to speak well of himself, yet in some cases it is lawful, *viz.* when it is for the advantage of others, or for our own necessary vindication; as thus it was here. For,

(2.) We have the reasons for what the apostle did; namely,

1. To

1. To preserve the Corinthians from being corrupted by the insinuations of the false apostles, *ver. 2, 3*. He tells them, *He was jealous over them with godly jealousy*, i. e. he was afraid lest their faith should be weakened, by hearkening to such suggestions as tended to lessen their regard to his ministry, by which they were brought to the Christian faith. He had *espoused them to one husband*, i. e. converted them to Christianity; (and the conversion of a soul is its marriage to the Lord Jesus) and he was desirous to *present them as a chaste virgin*, i. e. pure and spotless, and faithful, not having *their minds corrupted* with false doctrines, by false teachers; so as *Eve was beguiled by the subtilty of the serpent*. This godly jealousy in the apostle was a mixture of love and fear; and faithful ministers cannot but be afraid and concerned for their people, lest they should lose that which they have received and turn from what they have embraced, especially when *deceivers are gone abroad*, or have crept in among them.

2. To vindicate himself against the false apostles, forasmuch as they could not pretend they had another Jesus, or another spirit, or another gospel to preach to them, *ver. 4*. If this had been the case, there would have been some colour of reason *to bear with them*, or to hearken to them: But seeing there is but *one Jesus, one Spirit, and one gospel*, that is, or at least that ought to be, preached to them, and received by them; what reason could there be why the Corinthians should be prejudiced against him who first converted them to the faith, by the artifices of any adversary? It was a just occasion of jealousy, that such persons designed to preach *another Jesus, another Spirit, and another gospel*.

5. For I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles. 6. But though *I be rude in speech*, yet not in knowledge; but we have been thoroughly made manifest among you in all things. 7. Have I committed an offence in abasing my self that you might be exalted, because I have preached to you the gospel of God freely? 8. I robbed other churches, taking wages of them to do you service. 9. And when I was present with you and wanted, I was chargeable to no man: for that which was lacking to me, the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied: and in all things I have kept my self from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep *my self*. 10. As the truth of Christ is in me, no man shall stop me of this boasting in the regions of Achaia. 11. Wherefore? because I love you not? God knoweth. 12. But what I do, that I will do, that I may cut off occasion from them which desire occasion, that wherein they glory, they may be found even as we. 13. For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. 14. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. 15. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.

After the foregoing preface to what he was about to say, the apostle in these verses mentioneth,

(1.) His equality with the other apostles, that *he was not a whit behind the very chiefest of the apostles*, *ver. 5*. This he expresseth very modestly, *I suppose so*, and he might have spoken very positively. The *apostleship*, as an office, was equal in all the apostles; but the *apostles*, like other Christians, did differ one from another: These *stars differed one from another in glory*, and Paul was indeed of the first magnitude; yet he speaketh modestly of himself, and humbly owneth his personal infirmity, that he was *rude in speech*, i. e. he had not such a graceful delivery as some other might have. Some think that he was a man of a very low stature, his voice was answerably small; others think he might have had some impediment in his speech, perhaps a stammering tongue. However, he was not rude in knowledge, he was not unacquainted with the best rules of oratory and art of persuasion, much less was he ignorant of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, as had been *thoroughly manifested among them*.

(2.) His equality with the false apostles in this particular, the preaching the gospel unto them freely without wages. This the apostle largely insisteth on, and sheweth that as they could not but own him to be a minister of Christ, so they ought to acknowledge he had been a good friend to them. For,

1. He had preached the gospel to them freely, *ver. 7—10*. He had proved at large in his former epistle to them, the lawfulness of ministers receiving maintenance from the people, and the duty of the people to give them an honourable maintenance; and here he saith, he himself had *taken wages of other churches*, *ver. 8*. so that he had a right to have asked and received from them: Yet he waved his right, and chose rather to *abase himself* by working

with his hands in the trade of tent-making to maintain himself, than be *burdensome to them*, that they might *be exalted*, or encouraged to receive the gospel, which they had so cheap; yea, he chose rather to be supplied from Macedonia, than to be chargeable unto them.

2. He informeth them of the reason of this his conduct among them. And *negatively*, it was not because *he did not love them*, *ver. 11*. or was unwilling to receive tokens of their love. For love and friendship is manifested by mutual giving and receiving. But *positively*, it was to avoid offence, that *he might cut off occasion from them that desired occasion*. He would not give occasion for any to accuse him of worldly designs in preaching the gospel, or that he intended to make a trade of it to enrich himself; and that others who opposed him at Corinth might not in this respect gain an advantage against him: That wherein *they gloried*, as to this matter, *they might be found even as he*, *ver. 12*. It is not improbable to suppose, that the chief of the false teachers at Corinth, or some among them were rich, and taught (or deceived) the people freely, and might accuse the apostle or his fellow-labourers as mercenary men, that received hire or wages, and therefore the apostle kept to his resolution not to be chargeable to any of the Corinthians.

3. The false apostles are charged *as deceitful workers*, *ver. 13*. and that upon this account, because they would *transform themselves* into the likeness of the apostles of Christ; and though they were the *ministers of Satan*, would seem to be the *ministers of righteousness*. They would be as industrious and as generous in promoting error, as the apostles were in preaching truth; they would endeavour as much to undermine the kingdom of Christ, as the apostles did to establish it. There were counterfeit *prophets* under the Old Testament, that wore the garb, and learned the language of the prophets of the Lord. So there were counterfeit *apostles* under the New Testament, that seemed in many respects like the true apostles of Christ. And *no marvel* (saith the apostle) hypocrisy is a thing not to be much wondered at in this world, especially when we consider the great influence Satan hath upon the minds of many, who *ruleth in the hearts of the children of disobedience*: And as he can turn himself into any shape, and put on almost any form, and look sometimes *like an angel of light*, in order to promote his *kingdom of darkness*, so he will teach his ministers and instruments to do the same. But it followeth, *their end is according to their works*, *ver. 15*. i. e. The end will discover them to be *deceitful workers*, and their work will end in ruin and destruction.

16. I say again, Let no man think me a fool; if otherwise, yet as a fool receive me, that I may boast my self a little. 17. That which I speak, I speak it not after the Lord, but as it were foolishly in this confidence of boasting. 18. Seeing that many glory after the flesh, I will glory also. 19. For ye suffer fools gladly, seeing ye *your selves* are wise. 20. For ye suffer if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour you, if a man take of you, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on the face. 21. I speak as concerning reproach, as though we had been weak: howbeit, whereinfoever any is bold (I speak foolishly) I am bold also.

Here we have a further excuse, that the apostle maketh for what he was about to say in his own vindication.

(1.) He would not have them think he was guilty of folly, in saying what he said to vindicate himself. *Let no man think me a fool*, *ver. 16*. ordinarily indeed, it is unbecoming a wise man to be much and often speaking in his own praise; boasting of ourselves is usually not only a sign of a proud mind, but a mark of folly also; however, saith the apostle, yet *as a fool receive me*, i. e. if ye do count it folly in me to *boast a little*, yet give due regard to what I shall say.

(2.) He mentioneth a caution, to prevent abuse of what he should say, telling them what he spake, *he did not speak after the Lord*, *ver. 17*. i. e. He would not have them think, that boasting of ourselves, or glorying in what we have, is a thing commanded by the Lord in general unto Christians, nor yet that this is always necessary in our own vindication; though it may be lawfully used, because not *contrary* to the Lord, when, strictly speaking, it is not *after* the Lord. It is the duty and practice of Christians, in obedience to the command and example of the Lord, rather to humble and abase themselves; yet prudence must direct in what circumstances it is *needful* to do that which we may do *lawfully*, even speak of what God hath wrought *for us*, and *in us*, and *by us* too.

(3.) He giveth a good reason why *they* should suffer him to *boast a little*; namely, because they suffered others to do so, who had less reason. *Seeing many glory after the flesh*, i. e. of carnal privileges, or outward advantages and attainments; *I will glory also*, *ver. 18*. But he would not glory in *those things*, though he had as much or more reason than others to do so. But he gloried in his *infirmities*, as he tells them afterwards. The Corinthians thought

thought *themselves wise*, and might think it an instance of wisdom, to bear with the weakness of others, and therefore suffered others to do what might seem folly; therefore the apostle would have them bear with him: Or these words, *Ye suffer fools gladly, seeing ye yourselves are wise*, ver. 19. may be *ironical*, and then the meaning is this: notwithstanding all your wisdom, you willingly suffer yourselves to be *brought into bondage* under the Jewish yoke, or suffer others to tyrannize over you; nay, to *devour you*, or make a prey of you; and *take of you* hire for their own advantage; and to *exalt themselves* above you, and lord it over you; nay, even to *smite you on the face*, or impose upon you to your very faces, ver. 20. upbraiding you whilst they *reproach me*, as if you had *been very weak* in shewing regard to me, ver. 21. And seeing this was the case, that the Corinthians, or some among them, could so easily bear all this from the false apostles, it was reasonable for the apostle to desire, and expect they should bear with what might seem to them an indiscretion in him, seeing the circumstances of the case were such as made it needful, that *whereinsoever any were bold*, he should be *bold also*, ver. 21.

22. Are they Hebrews? so am I: are they Israelites? so am I: are they the seed of Abraham? so am I: 23. Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more: in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. 24. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. 25. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck; a night and a day I have been in the deep: 26. In journeying often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; 27. In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. 28. Besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. 29. Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not: 30. If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities. 31. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lye not. 32. In Damascus the governour under Aretas the king kept, the city of the Damascenes with a garison, desirous to apprehend me: 33. And through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands.

Here the apostle gives a large account of his own qualifications, labours, and sufferings, not out of pride or vain-glory, but to the honour of God, who had enabled him to do and suffer so much for the cause of Christ, and wherein he excelled the false apostles, that would lessen his character and usefulness among the Corinthians. Observe,

1. He mentioneth the privileges of his birth, ver. 22. which were equal to any they could pretend to; he was an Hebrew of the Hebrews, of a family among the Jews that never inter-married with the Gentiles: He was also an Israelite, and could boast of his being descended from the *beloved Jacob*, as well as they; and was also of the seed of Abraham, and not of the proselytes. It should seem from hence, that the false apostles were of the Jewish race, who gave disturbance to the Gentile converts.

2. He maketh mention also of his *apostleship*; that he was more than an ordinary minister of Christ, ver. 23. God had counted him faithful, and had put him into the ministry; he had been an useful minister of Christ unto them, they had found full proofs of his ministry: *Are they ministers of Christ? I am more so*.

3. He chiefly insisteth upon this, that he had been an extraordinary sufferer for Christ; and this is what he gloried in, or rather he gloried in the grace of God that had enabled him to be more *abundant in labours*, and to endure very great sufferings, such as *stripes above measure*, *frequent imprisonments*, and *often the dangers of death*, ver. 23. Note, When the apostle would prove himself an *extraordinary minister*, he proveth he had been an *extraordinary sufferer*. Paul was the apostle of the Gentiles, and for that reason was hated of the Jews; they did all they could against him, and among the Gentiles also he met with hard usage. Bonds and imprisonments were familiar to him; never was the most notorious malefactor more frequently in the hands of publick justice, than Paul was for righteousness sake: The jail and the whipping-post, and all other hard usages of those that are accounted the worst of men, were what he was accustomed to. As to the Jews, whenever he fell into their hands, they never spared him: *Five times* he fell under their lash, and received *forty stripes save one*, ver. 24. Forty stripes was the utmost their law allowed, Deut. xxv. 3. but it was usual with them, that they might not exceed, to abate one at least of that number. And to have the abatement of one *only*, was all the favour that ever Paul received from them. The Gentiles were not tied up to that

moderation, and among them *he was thrice beaten with rods*, of which we may suppose, once was at Philippi, Acts xvi. 22. *Once he was stoned* in a popular tumult, and was taken up for dead, Acts xiv. 19. He saith, that *thrice he suffered shipwreck*, and we may believe him, though the sacred history giveth a relation but of one. *A night and a day he had been in the deep*, ver. 25. i. e. in some deep dungeon or other shut up as a prisoner.

Thus he was all his days a constant confessor, perhaps scarce a year of his life after his conversion, passed without suffering some hardships or other for his religion: yet, this was not all, for wherever he went, he went in perils; he was exposed to perils of all sorts. If he *journeyed* by land, or voyaged by *sea*, he was in perils of *robbers* or enemies of some sort; the Jews his *own countrymen* sought to kill him, or do him a mischief; the heathen to whom he was sent, were not more kind to him, for among them he was in *peril*: If he was in the *city*, or in the *wilderness*, still he was in *peril*: He was in peril not only amongst avowed enemies, but among them also that called themselves brethren, but were *false brethren*, ver. 26.

Besides all this, he had great *weariness* and *painfulness* in his ministerial labours, and these are things that will come into account shortly, and people will be reckoned with for all the care and pains of their ministers concerning them. Paul was a stranger to wealth and plenty, power and pleasure, preferment and ease; he was in *watchings often*, and exposed to *hunger and thirst*; and *fastings often*, it may be out of necessity; and endured *cold and nakedness*, ver. 27. Thus was he, who was one of the greatest blessings of the age, used as if he had been the burden of the earth, and the plague of his generation. And yet this is not all, for as an apostle the *care of all the churches* lay on him, ver. 28. He mentions this last, as if this lay the heaviest upon him, and as if he could better bear all the persecutions of his enemies, than the scandals that were to be found in the churches he had the oversight of. *Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?* ver. 29. There was not a weak Christian, that he did not sympathize with, nor any one scandalized but he was affected therewith. See what little reason we have to be in love with the pomp and plenty of this world, when this blessed apostle, one of the best of men that ever lived, excepting Jesus Christ, felt so much hardship in it. Nor was he ashamed of all this, but, on the contrary, it was what he accounted his honour; and therefore as much against the grain as it was with him to glory, yet, saith he, *if I must needs glory*, if my adversaries will oblige me to it in my own necessary vindication, *I will glory in these my infirmities*, ver. 30. Note, Sufferings for righteousness sake will the most of any thing redound to our honour.

In the two last verses he mentioneth one particular part of his sufferings out of its place, as if he had forgotten it before, or because the deliverance God wrought for him was most remarkable; namely, the danger he was in at Damascus, soon after he was converted, and not settled in Christianity, at least in the ministry and apostleship. This is recorded, Acts ix. 24, 25. This was his first great danger and difficulty, and the rest of his life was of a piece with that. And it is observable, that lest it should be thought he spake more than was true, the apostle confirmeth this narrative with a solemn oath, or appeal to the omniscience of God, ver. 31. And it is a great comfort to a good man, that *the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*, who is an omniscient God, doth know the truth of all he saith, and knoweth all he doth, and all he suffereth for his sake.

C H A P. XII.

In this chapter the apostle proceedeth in maintaining the honour of his apostleship. He magnified his office, when there were those that vilified it. What he saith in his own praise was only in his own justification, and the necessary defence of the honour of his ministry, the preservation of which was necessary to the success thereof. First, He maketh mention of the favour God had shewn him, and the honour done him, and the methods God took to keep him humble; and the use he made of this dispensation, ver. 1—10. Then he addresseth himself to the Corinthians, blaming them for what was faulty among them, and giving a large account of his behaviour, and kind intentions towards them, ver. 11, ad fin.

1. **I**T is not expedient for me doubtless to glory: I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. 2. I knew a man in Christ, above fourteen years ago (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth) such an one caught up to the third heaven. 3. And I knew such a man (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth) 4. How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. 5. Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities. 6. For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but

but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me. 7. And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. 8. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. 9. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

Here we may observe,

(1.) The narrative the apostle giveth of the favours God had shewn him, and the honour he had done him; for doubtless he is the man in Christ of whom he speaketh: And concerning this, we may take notice,

1. Of the honour itself which was done to the apostle, viz. He was caught up into the third heaven, ver. 2. When this was, we cannot say, whether it was during those three days that he lay without sight at his conversion, or at some other time afterwards; much less can we pretend to say how this was, whether by a separation of his soul from his body, or by an extraordinary transport in the depth of contemplation: It would be presumption for us to determine, if not also to enquire into this matter; seeing the apostle himself saith, *Whether in the body or out of the body, he could not tell.* It was certainly a very extraordinary honour done him, in some sense he was caught up into the third heaven, i. e. the heaven of the blessed, above the aerial heavens, in which the fowls fly; above the starry heavens, which is adorned with those glorious orbs: it was into the third heaven, where God doth most eminently manifest his glory. We are not capable of knowing all, nor is it fit we should know very much of the particulars of that glorious place and state; it is our duty and interest to give diligence to make sure to ourselves a mansion there; and if that be cleared up to us, then we should long to be removed thither to abide there for ever.

This third heaven is called *paradise*, ver. 4. in allusion to the earthly paradise, out of which Adam was driven for his transgression; it is called the paradise of God, *Rev. ii. 7.* signifying to us, that by Christ we are restored to all the joys and honours we lost by sin, yea unto much better. The apostle doth not mention what he saw in the third heaven or paradise, but tells us he heard unspeakable words, such as it is not possible for a man to utter; such is the sublimeness of the matter, and our unacquaintedness with the language of the upper world: Nor was it lawful to utter those words, because while we are here in this world we have a more sure word of prophecy than such visions and revelations, 2 *Pet. i. 19.* We read of the tongue of angels, as well as of men, and Paul knew as much of that as ever any man upon earth did, and yet preferred charity before it, i. e. the sincere love of God and our neighbour. This account which the apostle giveth us of his vision, should check our curious desires after forbidden knowledge, and teach us to improve the revelation God hath given us in his word. Paul himself, who had been in the third heaven, did not publish to the world what he had heard there, but adhered to the doctrine of Christ: on that foundation the church is built, and on that we must build our faith and hope.

2. The modest and humble manner, in which the apostle mentioneth this matter, is observable. One would be apt to think, that one who had had such visions and revelations as these, should have boasted greatly of them; but saith he, *It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory,* ver. 1. He therefore did not mention this immediately, not till above fourteen years after, ver. 2. And then it is not without some reluctance, as a thing which in a manner he was forced to, by the necessity of the case. Again, he speaketh of himself in the third person, and doth not say *I am the man* that was thus honoured above other men. Again, his humility appeareth by the check he seemeth to put upon himself in ver. 6. which plainly sheweth he delighted not to dwell upon this theme. Thus was he, who was not behind the chiefest of the apostles in dignity, very eminent for his humility. Note, It is an excellent thing to have a lowly spirit in the midst of high advancements, and those that abase themselves shall be exalted.

(2.) The apostle giveth an account of the methods God took to keep him humble, and to prevent his being lifted up above measure; and this he speaketh of to balance the account that was given before of the visions and revelations he had had. Note, When God's people communicate their experiences, let them always remember to take notice of what God hath done to keep them humble, as well as what he hath done in favour to them, and for their advancement. Here observe,

1. The apostle was pained with a thorn in the flesh, and buffeted with a messenger of Satan, ver. 7. We are much in the

dark what this was, whether some great trouble, or some great temptation: Some think it was an acute bodily pain or sickness; others think it was the indignities done him by the false apostles, and the opposition he met with from them, particularly on the account of his speech, which was contemptible. However this was, God oftentimes bringeth this good out of evil, that the reproaches of our enemies help to hide pride from us; and this is certain, what the apostle calleth a thorn in his flesh, was for a time very grievous to him: but the thorns Christ wore for us, and with which he was crowned, do sanctify and make easy all the thorns in the flesh, we may at any time be afflicted with; for he suffered being tempted, that he might be able to succour them that are tempted. Temptations to sin are most grievous thorns, they are messengers of Satan to buffet us. Indeed it is a great grievance to a good man to be so much as tempted to sin.

2. The design of this was to keep the apostle humble, lest he should be exalted above measure, ver. 7. Paul himself knew he had not yet attained, neither was already perfect, and yet he was in danger of being lifted up with pride. If God love us, he will hide pride from us, and keep us from being exalted above measure; and spiritual burdens are ordered to cure spiritual pride. This thorn in the flesh is said to be a messenger of Satan, which he did not send with a good design, but, on the contrary, with ill intentions, to discourage the apostle, who had been so highly favoured of God, and hinder him in his work. But God designed this for good, and he over-ruled it for good, and made this messenger of Satan to be so far from being an hindrance, that it was a help to the apostle.

3. The apostle prayed earnestly to God for the removal of this sore grievance. Note, Prayer is a salve for every sore, a remedy for every malady; and when we are afflicted with thorns in the flesh, we should give ourselves to prayer: Therefore we are sometimes tempted, that we may learn to pray. The apostle besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from him, ver. 8. Note, Though afflictions are sent for our spiritual benefit, yet we may pray to God for the removal of them: We ought indeed to desire also, that they may reach the end for which they are designed. The apostle prayed earnestly, and repeated his requests, he besought the Lord thrice, i. e. often: So that if an answer be not given to the first prayer, nor to the second; we must hold on, and hold out till we receive an answer: Christ himself prayed to his Father thrice. As troubles are sent to teach us to pray, so they are continued, to teach us to continue instant in prayer.

4. We have an account of the answer given to the apostle's prayer; that although the trouble was not removed, yet an equivalent should be granted, *My grace is sufficient for thee.* Note, (1.) Though God accepted the prayer of faith, yet he doth not always answer it in the letter; as he sometimes granteth in wrath, so he sometimes denieth in love. (2.) That when God doth not remove our troubles and temptations; yet, if he give us grace sufficient for us, we have no reason to complain, or to say he dealeth ill by us. It is a great comfort to us, whatever thorns in the flesh we are pained with, God's grace is sufficient for us. Grace signifieth two things. 1. The good-will of God towards us, and that is enough to enlighten and enliven us, sufficient to strengthen and comfort us, to support our souls and cheer up our spirits in all afflictions and distresses. 2. The good work of God in us, the grace we receive from the fulness that is in Christ our head; and from him there shall be communicated that which is suitable and seasonable, and sufficient for his members. Christ Jesus understands our case, and knows our need, and will proportion the remedy to our malady, and not only strengthen us, but glorify himself. His strength is made perfect in our weakness. Thus his grace is manifested and magnified; he ordaineth his praise out of the mouths of babes and sucklings.

(3.) Here is the use which the apostle maketh of this dispensation, viz. He gloried in his infirmities, ver. 9. and took pleasure in them, ver. 10. He doth not mean his sinful infirmities, those we have reason to be ashamed of, and grieved at; but he meaneth his afflictions, his reproaches, necessities, persecutions, and distresses for Christ's sake, ver. 10. And the reason of his glory and joy on account of these things was this. They were fair opportunities for Christ to manifest the power and sufficiency of his grace resting upon him, by which he had so much experience of the strength of divine grace, that he could say, *when I am weak, then am I strong.* This is a Christian paradox: when we are weak in our selves, then we are strong in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ: when we see our selves weak in our selves, then we go out of our selves to Christ, and are qualified to receive strength from him, and experience most of the supplies of divine strength and grace.

11. I am become a fool in glorying, ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing. 12. Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds. 13. For what is it wherein ye were inferior to other churches,

churches, except *it be* that I my self was not burdensome to you? forgive me this wrong. 14. Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you; for I seek not yours, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children. 15. And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you, though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved. 16. But be it so, I did not burden you: nevertheless being crafty, I caught you with guile. 17. Did I make a gain of you by any of them whom I sent unto you? 18. I desired Titus, and with him I sent a brother: did Titus make a gain of you? walked we not in the same spirit? *walked* we not in the same steps? 19. Again, think you that we excuse our selves unto you? we speak before God in Christ: but *we do* all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying. 20. For I fear, lest when I come I shall not find you such as I would, and *that* I shall be found unto you such as ye would not: lest *there be* debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults: 21. And lest when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness, and fornication, and lasciviousness which they have committed.

In these verses the apostle addresseth himself to the Corinthians two ways.

(1.) He blameth them for what was faulty in them, *viz.* That they had not stood up in his defence as they ought to have done, and so made it the more needful for him to insist so much on his own vindication. They in a manner *compelled* him to commend himself, who *ought to have been commended of them*, ver. 11. And had they or some among them not failed on their part, it would have been less needful for him to have said so much on his own behalf. And he tells them further, they in particular had good reason to speak well of him, as being *in nothing behind the very chiefest apostles*, because he had given them full proof and evidence of his apostleship; for *the signs of an apostle were wrought among them in all patience, in signs and wonders, and mighty deeds*. Note, 1. It is a debt we owe to good men, to stand up in the defence of their reputation; and we are under special obligations to those we have received benefit by, especially spiritual benefit, to own them as instruments in God's hand of good to us, and to vindicate them when they are calumniated by others. 2. How much soever we are or ought to be esteemed by others, we ought always to think humbly of ourselves. See an example of this in this great apostle, who thought himself *to be nothing*, though in truth he was not behind the chiefest apostles. So far was he from seeking praise from men, though he tells them their duty to vindicate his reputation: so far was he from applauding himself, when he was forced to insist upon his own necessary self-defence.

(2.) He giveth a large account of his behaviour and kind intentions towards them; in which we may observe the characters of a faithful minister of the gospel.

1. He was not willing to be burdensome to them, nor did he seek *theirs* but *them*. He saith, ver. 13. he *had not been* burdensome to them for the time past, and tells them, ver. 14. he *would not be* burdensome to them for the time to come, when he should come to them: he spared their purses, and did not covet their money; *I seek not yours, but you*. He sought not to enrich himself, but to save their souls: he did not desire to make a property of them to himself, but to gain them over to Christ whose servant he was. Note, Those who aim at clothing themselves with the fleece of the flock, and take no care of the sheep, are hirelings, and not good shepherds.

2. He would gladly spend and be spent for them, ver. 15. i. e. he was willing to take pains and to suffer loss for their good. He would spend his time, his parts, his strength, his interest, his *all*, to do them service; nay so to spend as to be spent, and be like a candle which consumeth itself to give light to others.

3. He did not abate in his love to them, notwithstanding their unkindness and ingratitude to him; and therefore was contented and glad to take pains with them, though *the more abundantly he loved them, the less he was loved*, ver. 15. This is applicable to other relations: if others be wanting in their duty to us, it doth not follow therefore that we may neglect our duty to them.

4. He was careful not only that *he himself* should not be burdensome, but that *none he employed* should. This seemeth to be the meaning of what we read, ver. 16, 17, 18. If it should be objected by any, that though he did not himself burden them, yet that he *being crafty, caught them with guile*, i. e. he sent those among them that did pillage from them, and afterwards he shared with them in the profit. This was not so, saith the apostle, I did not make a gain of you myself, nor by any of them I sent; nor did Titus, nor any others. *We walked by the same spirit*, and

in the *same steps*. They all agreed in this matter, to do them all the good they could without being burdensome to them; to promote the gospel among them, and make it as easy to them as possible. Or this may be read with an *interrogation*, as utterly disclaiming any guile in himself and others toward them.

5. He was a man that did all things *for edifying*, ver. 19. This was his great aim and design to do good, to lay the foundation well, and then with care and diligence to build the superstructure.

6. He would not balk his duty for fear of displeasing them, though he was so careful to make himself easy to them. Therefore he was resolved to be faithful in reproofing sin, though he was therein *found to be such as they would not*, ver. 20. The apostle here mentioned several sins that are too commonly found among professors of religion, and are very reprobable; *debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults*: and though those who are guilty of these sins can hardly bear to be reproofed for them, yet faithful ministers must not fear offending the guilty by sharp reproofs, as they are needful, in publick and in private.

7. He was grieved at the apprehensions that he should find scandalous sins among them not duly repented of. This, he tells them, would be the cause of great humiliation and lamentation. Note, 1. The falls and miscarriages of professors cannot but be an humbling consideration to a good minister; and God sometimes taketh this way to humble those who might be under temptation to be lifted up. *I fear lest my God will humble me among you*. 2. We have reason to bewail those that sin and do not repent, to bewail many that have sinned and have not repented, ver. 21. If these have not as yet grace to mourn and lament their own case, their case is the more lamentable; and those that love God, and love them, should mourn for them.

CHAP. XIII.

In this chapter the apostle threateneth to be severe against obstinate sinners, and assigneth the reason thereof, ver. 1—6. Then he maketh a suitable prayer to God on the behalf of the Corinthians, with the reasons inducing him thereto, ver. 7—10. And concludeth his epistle with a valediction and a benediction, ver. 11—14.

1. **T**HIS is the third time I am coming to you: in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established. 2. I told you before, and foretel you as if I were present the second time, and being absent, now I write to them which heretofore have sinned, and to all other, that if I come again I will not spare: 3. Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, which to you-ward is not weak, but is mighty in you. 4. For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God: for we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you. 5. Examine your selves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves: know ye not your own selves, *how* that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates? 6. But I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates.

In these verses observe,

(1.) The apostle threateneth to be severe against obstinate sinners when he should come to Corinth, having now sent to them a first and second epistle, with proper admonitions and exhortations, in order to reform what was amiss among them. Concerning which we may take notice of,

1. The caution with which he proceeded in his censures: he was not hasty in using severity, but gave a first and second admonition. So some understand his words, ver. 1. *This is the third time I am coming to you*; referring to his first and second epistles, by which he admonished them, as *if he were present* with them, though in person *he was absent*, ver. 2. And according to this interpretation, these two epistles are the witnesses he meaneth in the first verse, referring rather to the direction of our Saviour, *Matt. xviii. 16.* concerning the manner how Christians should deal with offenders before they proceed to extremity, than to the law of Moses, *Deut. xvii. 6.* — *xix. 5.* for the behaviour of judges in criminal matters. We should go [or send] to our brother once and again, to tell him of his fault. Thus the apostle had *told* these Corinthians *before*, i. e. in his former epistle, and now he tells them, or *writeth to them which heretofore had sinned, and to all other*, giving warning unto all before he came in person *the third time*, to exercise severity against scandalous offenders. Others think the apostle had designed and prepared for his journey to Corinth twice already, but was providentially hindered, and now informeth them of his intentions *a third time* to come to them. However this be, it is observable he kept an account how often he endeavoured, and what pains he took with these Corinthians

Corinthians for their good: and we may be sure an account is kept in heaven, and we must be reckoned with another day, for the helps we have had for our souls, and how we have improved them.

2. The threatening itself, *That if (or when) he came again (in person) he would not spare* obstinate sinners, and such as were impenitent, in their scandalous enormities. He had told them before, he feared *God would humble him among them*, because he should find some that *had sinned and had not repented*; and now he declareth he would *not spare* such, but would inflict church-censures upon them, which are thought to have been accompanied in those early times with visible and extraordinary tokens of divine displeasure. Note, Though it is God's gracious method to bear long with sinners, yet he will not bear always; at length he will come, and will not spare them who remain obstinate and impenitent, notwithstanding all his methods to reclaim and reform them.

(2.) The apostle assigneth a reason why he would be thus severe, namely, for *a proof of Christ speaking in him*, which they sought after, ver. 3. The evidence of his apostleship was necessary for the credit, and confirmation, and success, of the gospel he preached; and therefore such as denied that, were justly and severely to be censured. It was the design of the false teachers to make the Corinthians call this matter into question, which yet they had *not weak* but strong or *mighty* proofs of, ver. 3. notwithstanding the mean figure he made in the world, and the contempt which by some was cast upon him; even as Christ himself *was crucified through weakness*, or appeared in his crucifixion as a weak and contemptible person, *but liveth by the power of God*, or in his resurrection and life manifesteth his divine power, ver. 4. So the apostles, how mean and contemptible soever they appeared to the world, did yet, as instruments, manifest the power of God, and particularly the power of his grace, in converting the world to Christianity. And therefore as a proof unto those who among the Corinthians sought a proof of Christ's speaking in the apostle, he puts them upon the proving their Christianity, ver. 5. *Examine yourselves, &c.* Hereby he intimateth, that if they could prove their own Christianity, this would be a proof of his apostleship; for if they were *in the faith*, if Jesus Christ was *in them*, this was a proof Christ *spoke in him*, because it was by his ministry they did believe. He had been not only an instructor, but a father to them. He had begotten them again by the gospel of Christ. Now, it could not be imagined that a divine power should go along with his ministrations, if he had not his commission from on high. If therefore they could prove themselves *not to be reprobates*, i. e. not to be rejected of Christ, *he trusted they should know that he was not a reprobate*, ver. 6. i. e. not disowned by Christ.

What the apostle here saith of the duty of the Corinthians to *examine themselves, &c.* with the particular view already mentioned, is applicable to the great duty of all that call themselves Christians, to examine themselves concerning their spiritual state. We should examine whether we *be in the faith*, because it is a matter in which we may be easily deceived, and wherein a deceit is highly dangerous: we are therefore concerned to *prove our own selves*, to put the question to our own souls, whether Christ be in us, or not; and *Christ is in us, except we be reprobates*: So that either we are true Christians, or we are great cheats; and what a reproachful thing is it for a man not to know himself, not to know his own mind?

7. Now I pray to God that ye do no evil; not that we should appear approved, but that ye should do that which is honest though we be as reprobates. 8. For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth. 9. For we are glad when we are weak, and ye are strong: and this also we wish, *even your perfection*. 10. Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction.

Here we have,

(1.) The apostle's prayer to God on the behalf of the Corinthians, that they might *do no evil*, ver. 7. This is the most desirable thing we can ask of God, both for ourselves and for our friends, to be kept from sin, that we and they may do no evil; and it is most needful, that we often pray to God for his grace to keep us, because without that we cannot keep ourselves. We are more concerned to pray, that we may not *do evil*, than that we may not *suffer evil*.

(2.) The reasons why the apostle put up this prayer to God on behalf of the Corinthians; which reasons have a special reference to their case, and the subject-matter about which he was writing to them. Observe, he tells them,

1. It was not so much for his own personal reputation, as for the honour of religion; *not that we should appear approved, but that ye should do that which is honest*, or decent, and for the credit of religion, though we should be reproached and vilified, and accounted as *reprobates*, ver. 7. Note, (1.) The great desire

of faithful ministers of the gospel is, that the gospel they preach may be honoured, however their persons may be vilified. (2.) The best way to adorn our holy religion, is, *to do that which is honest*, and of good report; to walk so as becometh the gospel of Christ.

2. Another reason was this; that they might be free from all blame and censure when he should come to them. This is intimated in ver. 8. *We can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth*. If therefore they did not do evil, nor act contrary to their profession of the gospel, the apostle had no power nor authority to punish them. He had said before, chap. x. 8. and saith here, ver. 10. *The power which the Lord had given him was to edification, not to destruction*. So that although the apostle had great powers committed to him for the credit and advancement of the gospel, yet he could not do any thing to the disparagement of the truth, nor the discouragement of them who obeyed it. He could not, i. e. he would not, he dared not, he had no commission to act against the truth; and it is remarkable, how the apostle did rejoice in this blessed impotency. *We are glad*, saith he, ver. 9. *when we are weak, and ye are strong*, i. e. that we have no power to censure those who are strong in the faith, and fruitful in good works. Some understand this passage thus, Though we are weak through persecutions and contempt, we bear it patiently, and also joyfully, while we see that you are strong, that you are prosperous in holiness, and persevering in well-doing. For,

3. He desired *their perfection*, ver. 9. i. e. that they might be sincere, and aim at perfection; sincerity is our gospel-perfection: or else he wished there might be a thorough reformation amongst them. He not only desired that they might be kept from sin, but also that they might grow in grace, and increase in holiness, and that all that was amiss among them might be rectified and reformed. This was the great end of his writing this epistle, and that freedom he used with them by *writing these things*, i. e. those friendly admonitions and warnings, *being absent, that so being present he should not use sharpness*, ver. 10. i. e. not proceed to the utmost extremity in the exercise of the power which the Lord had given him as an apostle, *to revenge all disobedience*, chap. x. 6.

11. Finally, brethren, farewell: Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you. 12. Greet one another with an holy kiss. 13. All the saints salute you. 14. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the holy Ghost, *be with you all*. Amen.

Thus the apostle concludeth his epistle with,

(1.) A valediction. He giveth them a parting *farewell*, and taketh his leave of them for the present with hearty good wishes for their spiritual welfare. In order to which,

1. He giveth them several good exhortations, *e. g.* (1.) To be *perfect*, or to be knit together in love, which would tend greatly to their benefit and advantage, as a church or Christian society. (2.) To be of *good comfort* under all the sufferings and persecutions they might endure for the cause of Christ, or any calamities and disappointments they might meet with in the world. (3.) To be of *one mind*, which would greatly tend to their comfort; for the more easy we are with our brethren, the more ease we shall have in our own souls. The apostle would have them as far as was possible to be of the same opinion and judgment; however, if this could not be attained to, yet, (4.) He exhorteth them *to live in peace*, that difference in opinion should not cause an alienation of affections; that they should be at peace among themselves. He would have all the schisms healed that were among them, that there should be no more contentions and wrath found among them; to prevent which, they should avoid *debates, envyings, backbitings, whisperings*, and such like enemies to peace.

2. He encourageth them with the promise of God's presence among them. *The God of love and peace shall be with you*, ver. 11. Note, (1.) God is the God of love and peace. He is the author of peace, and lover of concord: he hath loved us and is willing to be at peace with us; and commands us to love him, and to be reconciled to him, and also that we love one another, and be at peace among ourselves. (2.) God will be with them that live in love and peace. He will love them that love peace; he will dwell with them here, and they shall dwell with him for ever. Such shall have God's *gracious* presence here, and be admitted to his *glorious* presence hereafter.

3. He giveth directions to them to salute each other, and sends kind salutations to them from those that were with him, ver. 12, 13. He would have them testify their affection to one another by the sacred rite of a *kiss of charity*, which was then used, but hath long been disused, to prevent all occasions of wantonness and impurity, in the more declining and degenerate state of the church.

(2.) The apostolical benediction, ver. 14. *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy*

Holy Ghost be with you all. Thus the apostle concludeth his epistle, and thus it is usual and proper to dismiss worshipping assemblies. This plainly proveth the doctrine of the gospel, and is an acknowledgment, that *Father, Son, and Spirit*, are *three* distinct persons, yet but *one* God; and herein *the same*, that they are the fountain of all blessings to men. It likewise speaketh our duty, which is to have an eye by faith, to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; to live in a continual regard to the *three* persons in the *Trinity*, into whose name we were *baptized*, and in whose name we are *blessed*.

This is a very solemn benediction, and we should give all diligence to inherit this blessing, *viz.* The *grace* of Christ, the *love* of God, and the *communion* (or communication) of the Holy Ghost: The grace of Christ as Redeemer, the love of God that sent the Redeemer, and all the communications of this grace and love which come to us by the Holy Ghost; it is the communications of the Holy Ghost that qualify us for an interest in the grace of Christ, and the love of God: And we can desire no more to make us happy than the grace of Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost. *Amen.*

A N

E X P O S I T I O N

O F T H E

Epistle of St. PAUL to the GALATIANS,

W I T H

P R A C T I C A L O B S E R V A T I O N S.

This epistle of Paul is directed not to the church or churches of a single city, as some others are; but of a country or province; for so Galatia was. It is very probable, that these Galatians were first converted to the Christian faith by his ministry; but if he was not the instrument of planting, yet at least he had been employed in watering these churches, as is evident from this epistle itself, and also from Acts xviii. 23. where we find him going over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples.

While he was with them, they had expressed the greatest esteem and affection both for his person and ministry; but he had not been long absent from them before some Judaizing teachers got in among them, by whose arts and insinuations they were soon drawn into a meaner opinion, both of the one and of the other.

That which these false teachers chiefly aimed at, was to draw them off from the truth as it is in Jesus, particularly in the great doctrine of Justification, which they grossly perverted by asserting the necessity of joining the observation of the law of Moses with faith in Christ in order to it; and the better to accomplish this their design, they did all they could to lessen the character and reputation of the apostle, and to raise up their own on the ruins of his; representing him as one, who if he was to be owned as an apostle, yet was much inferior to others, and particularly who deserved not such a regard as Peter, James, and John, whose followers, it is likely, they pretended to be: and in both these attempts they had but too great success.

This was the occasion of his writing this epistle; wherein he expresses his great concern, that they had suffered themselves to be so soon turned aside from the faith of the gospel; vindicates his own character and authority as an apostle against the aspersions of his enemies; shewing that his mission and doctrine were both divine, and that he was not, upon any account, behind the very chiefest of the apostles, 2 Cor. xi. 5. He then sets himself to assert and maintain the great gospel-doctrine of justification by faith without the works of the law, and to obviate some difficulties that might be apt to arise in their minds concerning it: and having established this important doctrine, he exhorts them to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free, cautions them against the abuse of this liberty, gives them several very needful counsels and directions; and then concludes the epistle with giving them the true character of those false teachers, by whom they had been ensnared; and, on the contrary, with his own temper and behaviour. In all which, his great scope and design was, to recover those that had been perverted, to settle those that might be wavering, and to confirm such among them as had kept their integrity.

C H A P. I.

In this chapter, after the preface or introduction, ver. 1—6. the apostle severely reproves these churches for their defection from the faith, ver. 6—10. And then proves his own apostleship, which his enemies had brought them to question. (1.) From his end and design in preaching the gospel, ver. 10. (2.) From his having received it by immediate revelation, ver. 11, 12. For the proof of which, he acquaints them, (1.) What his former conversation was,

ver. 13, 14. (2.) How he was converted and called to the apostleship, ver. 15, 16. (3.) How he behaved himself afterwards, ver. 16, ad fin.

1. **P**AUL an apostle (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead) 2. And all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of

of Galatia : 3. Grace *be* to you, and peace from God the Father, and *from* our Lord Jesus Christ, 4. Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father : 5. To whom *be* glory for ever and ever. Amen.

In these verses we have the preface or introduction to the epistle. Where observe,

(1.) The person or persons from whom this epistle is sent, from Paul, *an apostle*, &c. and *all the brethren that were with him*. (1.) The epistle is sent from Paul, he only was the penman of it. And because there were some among the Galatians, who endeavoured to lessen his character and authority, in the very front of it, he gives a general account, both of his office, and the manner in which he was called to it : Which afterwards in this, and the following chapter, he enlarges more upon. As to his office, he was an *apostle*, he is not afraid to stile himself so, though his enemies would scarce allow him this title ; and to let them see, that he did not assume this character without just ground, he acquaints them how he was called to this dignity and office, and assures them that his commission to it was wholly divine, for he was an apostle, *not of men, neither by man* ; he had not the common call of an ordinary minister, but an extraordinary call from heaven, to this office ; he neither received his qualification for it, nor his designation to it, by the mediation of men, but had both the one and the other directly from above ; for he was an apostle *by Jesus Christ*, he had his instructions and commission immediately from him ; and consequently from *God the Father*, who in respect of his divine nature was one with him, and who, as mediator, had appointed him to be the apostle and high-priest of our profession, and as such to authorize others to this office. And he adds, *Who raised him from the dead*, both to acquaint us, that herein God the Father gave a publick testimony to Christ's being his Son, and the promised *Messiah* ; and also, that as his call to the apostleship was immediately from Christ, so it was after his resurrection from the dead, and when he was entered upon his exalted state. So that he had reason to look upon himself, not only as standing upon a level with the other apostles, but as in some sort preferred above them ; for, whereas they were called by him when on earth, he had his call from him when in heaven. Thus does the apostle (being constrained to it by his adversaries) magnify his office ; which shews, that though men should by no means be proud of any authority they are possessed of, yet, at some times, and upon some occasions, it may become needful to assert it. But, (2.) He joins *all the brethren that were with him* in the inscription of the epistle, and writes in their name as well as his own. By *the brethren that were with him* may be understood, either the Christians in common of that place where he now was, or such as were employed as ministers of the gospel. These, notwithstanding his own superior character and attainments, he is ready to own as his brethren ; and though he only wrote the epistle, yet he joins them with himself in the inscription of it. Wherein, as he shews his own great modesty and humility, and how remote he was from an assuming temper, so he might do this to dispose these churches to a greater regard to what he wrote, since hereby it would appear that he had their concurrence with him in the doctrine which he had preached, and was now about to confirm, and that it was no other than what was both published and professed by others, as well as himself.

(2.) To whom this epistle is sent, *to the churches of Galatia* ; there were several churches at that time in this country, and it should seem that all of them were more or less corrupted through the arts of those seducers, who had crept in among them ; and therefore Paul, on whom *came daily the care of all the churches*, being deeply affected with their state, and concerned for their recovery to the faith and establishment in it, writes this epistle to them ; he directs it to all of them, as being all more or less concerned in the matter of it ; and he gives them the name of churches, though they had done enough to forfeit it ; for never corrupt churches are allowed to be churches ; and no doubt there were some among them who still continued in the faith, and he was not without hope that others might be recovered to it.

(3.) The apostolical benediction, *ver. 3*. Wherein the apostle, and the brethren that were with him, wish these churches *grace and peace from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ*. This is the usual blessing wherewith he blest the churches in the name of the Lord, *grace and peace*. Grace includes God's good-will towards us, and his good work upon us ; and peace implies in it all that inward comfort, or outward prosperity, which is really needful for us ; and they come from *God the Father*, as the fountain, through *Jesus Christ*, as the chanel of conveyance ; both these the apostle wishes for these Christians. But we may observe, first *grace*, and then *peace*, for there can be no true peace without grace. And having mentioned the Lord Jesus Christ, he cannot pass without enlarging upon his love ; and therefore adds, *ver. 4. Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver, &c.* Jesus Christ gave himself for our sins, as a great sacrifice to make atonement for us ; this the justice of God required, and this he

freely submitted to for our sakes : And one great end hereof was *to deliver us from this present evil world* ; not only to redeem us from the wrath of God, and the curse of the law, but also to recover us from the corruption that is in the world through lust, and to rescue us from the vicious practices and customs of it, unto which we are naturally enslaved ; and possibly also to set us free from the Mosaic constitution, for so *διὰν ἑτοῦ* is used, 1 Cor. ii. 6, 8. From whence we may note, (1.) That this present world is an evil world. It is become so by the sin of man, and it is so on the account of the sin and sorrow with which it abounds, and the many snares and temptations to which we are exposed, as long as we continue in it. But, (2.) That Jesus Christ has died to deliver us from this present evil world, not presently to remove his people out of it, but to rescue them from the power of it, to keep them from the evil of it, and in due time to possess them of another and better world : And this the apostle informs us, he has done *according to the will of God and our Father*. In offering up himself a sacrifice for this end and purpose, he acted by the appointment of the Father, as well as with his own free consent ; and therefore, we have the greatest reason to depend upon the efficacy and acceptableness of what he has done and suffered for us : Yea, from hence we have encouragement to look upon God as *our Father* ; for thus the apostle here represents him ; as he is the Father of our Lord Jesus, so in and through him he is also the Father of all true believers ; as our blessed Saviour himself acquaints us, *John xx. 17*. when he tells his disciples, that he was *ascending to his Father and their Father*.

The apostle having thus taken notice of the great love wherewith Christ hath loved us, concludes this preface with a solemn ascription of praise and glory to him, *ver. 5. To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen*. Intimating, that on this account he is justly entitled to our highest esteem and regard : Or this doxology may be considered, as referring both to God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ ; from whom he had just before been wishing grace and peace. They are both the proper objects of our worship and adoration, and all honour and glory is perpetually due to them, both on the account of their own infinite excellencies, and also on the account of the blessings we receive from them.

6. I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ, unto another gospel : 7. Which is not another ; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. 8. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. 9. As we said before, so say I now again, If any *man* preach any other gospel unto you, than that ye have received, let him be accursed.

Here the apostle comes to the body of the epistle, and he begins it with a more general reproof of these churches, for their unsteadiness in the faith, which he afterwards, in some following parts of it, enlarges more upon. Here we may observe,

(1.) How much he was concerned at their defection. *I marvel, &c.* It at once filled him with the greatest surprize and sorrow. Their sin and folly was, that they did not hold fast the doctrine of Christianity, as it had been preached to them ; but suffered themselves to be removed from the purity and simplicity of it : and there were several things by which their defection was greatly aggravated. As, (1.) That they were removed *from him that had called them*. Not only from the *apostle*, who had been the instrument of calling them into the fellowship of the gospel, but from *God himself*, by whose order and direction the gospel was preached to them, and they invited to a participation of the privileges of it. So that herein they had been guilty of a great abuse of his kindness and mercy towards them. (2.) That they had been *called into the grace of Christ*. As the gospel which had been preached to them, was the most glorious discovery of divine grace and mercy in Christ Jesus ; so thereby they had been called to partake of the greatest blessings and benefits, such as justification and reconciliation with God here, and eternal life and happiness hereafter. These our Lord Jesus has purchased for us at the expence of his precious blood, and freely bestows upon all that sincerely accept of him : And therefore, in proportion to the greatness of the privilege they enjoyed, such was their sin and folly in deserting it, and suffering themselves to be drawn off from the established way of obtaining these blessings. (3.) That they were *so soon removed*. In a very little time they lost that relish and esteem of this grace of Christ, which they seemed to have, and too easily fell in with those that taught justification by the works of the law, as many did that had been bred up in the opinions and notions of the Pharisees, which they mingled with the doctrine of Christ, and so corrupted it ; and this, as it was an instance of their weakness, so it was a farther aggravation of their guilt. (4.) That they were removed to *another gospel*, which yet was *not another*. Thus the apostle represents the doctrine of these Judaizing teachers ; he calls it *another gospel*, because it

opened a different way of justification and salvation from that which was revealed in the gospel, viz. by works, and not by faith in Christ. And yet he adds, *which is not another*, i. e. You will find it to be no gospel at all. Not really another gospel, but the *perverting of the gospel of Christ*, and the overturning of the foundations of that; whereby he intimates, that they who go about to establish any other way to heaven, than what the gospel of Christ has revealed, are guilty of a gross perversion of it, and, in the issue, will find themselves wretchedly mistaken.

Thus the apostle endeavours to impress upon these Galatians, a due sense of their guilt in forsaking the gospel-way of justification; and yet at the same time he tempers his reproof with mildness and tenderness towards them, and represents them as rather drawn into it by the arts and industry of *some that troubled them*, than as coming into it of their own accord; which though it did not excuse them, yet was some extenuation of their fault. And hereby he teaches us, that in reproving of others, as we should be faithful, so we should also be gentle, and endeavour to *restore them in the spirit of meekness*, chap. vi. 1.

(2.) How confident he was, that the gospel he had preached to them, was the only true gospel; he was so fully persuaded of this, that he pronounces an anathema upon those that pretended to preach any other gospel, *ver. 8.* And to let them see that this did not proceed from any rashness, or intemperate zeal in him, he repeats it again, *ver. 9.* This will not justify our thundering out anathema's against those that differ from us in lesser things. It is only against those that forge a new gospel, that overturn the foundation of the covenant of grace, by setting up the works of the law in the place of Christ's righteousness, and corrupting Christianity with Judaism, that Paul denounces this. He puts the case, *suppose we should preach any other gospel; nay, suppose an angel from heaven should, not as if it were possible for an angel from heaven to be the messenger of a lie; but it is expressed so, the more to strengthen what he was about to say.* If you have any other gospel preached to you by any other person under our name, or under colour of having it from an angel himself; you must conclude you are imposed upon: and whoever preaches another gospel lays himself under a curse, and is in danger of laying you under it too.

10. For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ. 11. But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me, is not after man. 12. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. 13. For ye have heard of my conversation in time past, in the Jews religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: 14. And profited in the Jews religion, above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers. 15. But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mothers womb, and called me by his grace, 16. To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: 17. Neither went I up to Jerusalem, to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. 18. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem, to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. 19. But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lords brother. 20. Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not. 21. Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia; 22. And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judea, which were in Christ: 23. But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past, now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed. 24. And they glorified God in me.

What Paul had said more generally in the preface of this epistle, he now proceeds more particularly to enlarge upon: There he had declared himself to be an *apostle of Christ*; and here he comes more directly to support his claim to that character and office. There were some in the churches of Galatia, who were prevailed with to call this into question; for they that preached up the ceremonial law, did all they could to lessen Paul's reputation, who preached the pure gospel of Christ to the Gentiles: and therefore he here sets himself to prove the *divinity*, both of his *mission* and *doctrine*, that thereby he might wipe off the aspersions which his enemies had cast upon him, and recover these Christians into a better opinion of the gospel he had preached to them. This he gives sufficient evidence of,

1. From the scope and design of his ministry, which was *not to persuade men, but God, &c.* The meaning of this may be either, that in his preaching the gospel he did not act in obedience to *men*, but *God*, who had called him to this work and office; or,

that his aim therein was not to bring persons to the obedience of *men*, but of *God*. As he professed to act by a commission from God; so that which he chiefly aimed at, was to promote his glory, by recovering sinners into a state of subjection to him. And as this was the great end he was pursuing, so, agreeably hereunto, *he did not seek to please men*: He did not, in his doctrine, accommodate himself to the humours of persons, either to gain their *affection*, or to avoid their *resentment*; but his great care was to approve himself to God. The Judaizing teachers, by whom these churches were corrupted, had discovered a very different temper; they mixed works with faith, and the law with the gospel, only to please the Jews, whom they were willing to court and keep in with, that they might escape persecution. But Paul was a man of another spirit; he was not so solicitous to please them, or to mitigate their rage against him, as to alter the doctrine of Christ, either to gain their *favour*, or to avoid their *fury*. And he gives this very good reason for it, that *if he yet pleased men, he should not be the servant of Christ*: These he knew were utterly inconsistent, and that no man could serve two such masters; and therefore, though he would not needlessly displease any, yet he dare not allow himself to gratify men at the expence of his faithfulness to Christ. Thus, from the sincerity of his aims and intentions in the discharge of his office, he proves that he was truly an apostle of Christ. And from this, his temper and behaviour, we may note, 1. That the great end which ministers of the gospel should aim at, is to bring men to God. 2. That they who are faithful will not seek to please men, but to approve themselves to God. 3. That they must not be solicitous to please men, if they would approve themselves faithful servants to Christ. But if this argument should not be thought sufficient, he goes on to prove his apostleship,

2. From the manner wherein he received the gospel he preached to them; concerning which, he assures them, *ver. 11, 12.* that he had it not by *information* from others, but by *revelation* from heaven. One thing peculiar in the character of an apostle, was, that he had been called to, and instructed for, this office immediately by Christ himself. And this he here shews, he was by no means defective in, whatever his enemies might suggest to the contrary. Ordinary ministers, as they receive their call to preach the gospel by the *mediation* of others, so it is by means of the *instruction* and *assistance* of others, that they are brought to the knowledge of it. But Paul acquaints them, that he had his *knowledge* of the gospel, as well as his *authority* to preach it, directly from the Lord Jesus; the gospel which he preached, was not *after man*, *he neither received it of man, nor was he taught it by man*; but by immediate inspiration, or revelation from Christ himself. This he was concerned to make out, to prove himself an apostle; and to this purpose,

(1.) He tells them what his education was, and what accordingly his conversation in time past had been, *ver. 13, 14.* particularly he acquaints them, that he had been brought up in the Jewish religion, and that *he had profited in it above many his equals of his own nation*: That *he had been exceedingly zealous of the traditions of the elders*, such doctrines and customs as had been invented by their fathers, and conveyed down from one generation to another; yea, to that degree, that in his zeal for them, *he had beyond measure persecuted the church of God, and wasted it.* He had not only been a rejecter of the Christian religion, notwithstanding the many evident proofs that were given of its divine original; but he had been a persecutor of it too, and had applied himself with the utmost violence and rage to destroy the professors of it. This Paul often takes notice of for the magnifying of that free and rich grace, that had wrought so wonderful a change in him, whereby of so great a sinner he was made a sincere penitent, and from a persecutor, was become an apostle. And it was very fit to mention it here; for from hence it would appear, that he was not led to Christianity, as many others are, purely by education, since he had been bred up in an enmity and opposition to it; and they might reasonably suppose, that it must be something very extraordinary, that had made so great a change in him, which had conquered the prejudices of his education, and brought him not only to profess, but to preach that doctrine, which he had before so vehemently opposed.

(2.) In how wonderful a manner he was turned from the error of his ways, brought to the knowledge and faith of Christ, and appointed to the office of an apostle, *ver. 15, 16.* This was not done in an ordinary way, or by ordinary means, but in an extraordinary manner. For, (1.) God had *separated him hereunto from his mother's womb*: the change that was wrought in him, was in pursuance of a divine purpose concerning him; whereby he was appointed to be a Christian and an apostle, before he came into the world, and had done either good or evil. (2.) He was *called by his grace*. All that are savingly converted are called by the grace of God, their conversion is the effect of his good pleasure concerning them, and is effected by his power and grace in them: But there was something peculiar in the case of Paul, both in the *suddenness* and *greatness* of the change wrought in him; and also in the *manner* wherein it was effected, which was not by the mediation of others, as the instruments of it, but by Christ's personal appearance to him, and immediate operation upon him, whereby it was rendered a more special and extraordinary instance of

of divine power and favour. (3.) He had Christ *revealed in him*. He was not only revealed to him, but *in him*. It will but little avail us, to have Christ revealed to us, if he is not also revealed in us; but this not the case of Paul, it pleased God to reveal his Son in him, to bring him to the knowledge of Christ and his gospel, by special and immediate revelation. And, (4.) It was with this design, that he should preach him among the heathen; not only that he should embrace him himself, but preach him to others; so that he was both a Christian and an apostle by revelation.

(3.) He acquaints them how he behaved himself hereupon, from ver. 16. to the end; being thus called to this work and office, *he conferred not with flesh and blood*. This may be taken more generally, and so we may learn from it, that when God calls us by his grace, we must not consult flesh and blood. But the meaning of it here is, that he did not consult men; he did not apply himself to any other for their advice and direction; *neither did he go up to Jerusalem to those that were apostles before him*; as though he needed to be approved by them, or to receive any further instructions or authority from them: But instead of that, he steered another course, and *went into Arabia*, either as a place of retirement proper for receiving further divine revelations; or in order to preach the gospel there among the Gentiles, being appointed to be the apostle of the Gentiles; and from thence *he returned again to Damascus*, where he had first begun his ministry, and from whence he had with difficulty escaped the rage of his enemies, *Acts ix*. And it was not till *three years after* his conversion, that *he went up to Jerusalem to see Peter*; and when he did so, he made but a very short stay with him, no more than *fifteen days*; nor while he was there, did he go much into conversation; for *other of the apostles he saw none, but James the Lord's brother*. So that it could not well be pretended, that he was indebted to any other, either for his knowledge of the gospel, or his authority to preach it; but it appeared that both his qualifications for, and his call to, the apostolick office were extraordinary and divine. This account being of importance, to establish his claim to this office, to remove the unjust censures of his adversaries, and to recover the Galatians from the impressions they had received to his prejudice; he confirms it by a solemn oath, *ver. 20*. declaring as in the presence of God, that what he had said was strictly true; and that he had not in the least falsified in what he had related; which though it will not justify us in solemn appeals to God upon every occasion, yet shews that in matters of weight and moment, this may sometimes not only be lawful, but duty. After this he acquaints them, that *he came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia*; having made this short visit to Peter, he returns to his work again; he had no communication at that time with the churches of Christ in Judea, they had not so much as seen his face: But having heard that he who persecuted them in times past, now preached the faith which he once destroyed, they glorified God, because of him; thanksgivings were rendered by many unto God on that behalf; the very report of this mighty change in him, as it filled them with joy, so it excited them to give glory to God on the account of it.

CHAP. II.

The apostle in this chapter continues the relation of his past life and conduct, which he had begun in the former; and by some farther instances of what had passed between him and the other apostles, makes it appear that he was not beholden to them, either for his knowledge of the gospel, or his authority as an apostle, as his adversaries would insinuate; but, on the contrary, that he was owned and approved even by them, as having an equal commission with them to this office. Particularly he, (1.) Informs them, of another journey which he took to Jerusalem many years after the former; and how he behaved himself at that time, *ver. 1—11*. And, (2.) Gives them an account of another interview he had with the apostle Peter at Antioch; and how he was obliged to behave himself towards him there. And from the subject-matter of that conversation, he proceeds to discourse on the great doctrine of justification by faith in Christ without the works of the law; which it was the main design of this epistle to establish, and which he enlarges more upon in the two following chapters.

1. THEN fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem, with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also. 2. And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run in vain. 3. But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised: 4. And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spie out our liberty which we have

in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: 5. To whom we gave place by subjection, no not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you. 6. But of these, who seemed to be somewhat, (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no mans person) for they who seemed to be somewhat, in conference added nothing to me. 7. But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; 8. (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me towards the Gentiles) 9. And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision. 10. Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do.

It should seem by the account Paul gives of himself in this chapter, that from the very first preaching and planting of Christianity, there was a difference of apprehension between those Christians that had first been Jews, and those that had first been Gentiles. Many of those that had been first Jews, retained a regard to the ceremonial law, and strove to keep up the reputation of that; but those that had first been Gentiles had no regard to the law of Moses, but took pure Christianity as perfective of natural religion, and resolved to stick to that. Peter was the apostle of the circumcision, preached the gospel to them; and the ceremonial law, though dead with Christ, yet not being as yet buried, he connived at the respect kept up for it. But Paul was the apostle of the Gentiles; and though he was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, yet he adhered to pure Christianity. Now in this chapter he tells us, what passed between him and the other apostles, and particularly between him and Peter hereupon.

In these verses he informs us of another journey which he took to Jerusalem, and of what passed between him and the other apostles there, from ver. 1, to the 11th. And here he acquaints us,

(1.) With some circumstances relating to this his journey thither. As particularly, (1.) With the time of it; that it was not till *fourteen years* after the former, mentioned *chap. i. 18*. or (as others chuse to understand it) from his conversion, or from the death of Christ. It was an instance of the great goodness of God, that so useful a person was for so many years continued in his work. And it was some evidence, that he had no dependence upon the other apostles, but had an equal authority with them; that he had been so long absent from them, and all the while employed in preaching and propagating pure Christianity, without being called into question by them for it; which it may be thought they would have done, had he been inferior to them, and his doctrine disapproved by them. (2.) With his companions in it; *he went up with Barnabas, and took with him Titus also*. If the journey here spoken of was the same with that recorded *Acts xv*. (as many think) then we have a plain reason why Barnabas went along with him; for he was chosen by the Christians at Antioch, to be his companion and associate in the affair he went about. But as it does not appear, that Titus was put into the same commission with him, so the chief reason of his taking him along with him seems to have been to let them at Jerusalem see, that he was neither ashamed nor afraid to own the doctrine which he had constantly preached: For though Titus was now become not only a convert to the Christian faith, but a preacher of it too: yet he was by birth a Gentile, and uncircumcised. And therefore, by his making him his companion, it appeared that his doctrine and practice were of a piece; and that as he had preached the no-necessity of circumcision, and observing the law of Moses, so he was ready to own and converse with those that were uncircumcised. (3.) With the reason of it, which was a divine revelation he had concerning it; *he went up by revelation*; not of his own head, much less as being summoned to appear there, but by special order and direction from heaven. It was a privilege with which this apostle was often favoured, to be under a special divine conduct in his motions and undertakings; and though this is what we have no reason to expect, yet it should teach us in every thing of moment, we go about, to endeavour, as far as we are capable, to see our way made plain before us, and to commit ourselves to the guidance of providence.

(2.) He gives us an account of his behaviour while he was at Jerusalem; which was such as made it appear, that he was not in the least inferior to the other apostles; but that both his authority and qualifications were every way equal to theirs. Particularly he acquaints us,

(1.) That *he there communicated the gospel to them, which he preached among the Gentiles, but privately, &c.* Where we may observe

observe both the faithfulness and prudence of our great apostle. (1.) His faithfulness in giving them a free and fair account of the doctrine which he had all along preached among the Gentiles, and was still resolved to preach, *viz.* that of pure Christianity, free from all mixtures of Judaism. This he knew was a doctrine, that would be ungrateful to many there, and yet he was not afraid to own it; but in a free and friendly manner lays it open before them, and leaves them to judge whether or no it was not the true gospel of Christ. And yet, (2.) He uses prudence and caution herein for fear of giving offence, he chuses rather to do it in a more private than in a publick way, and to them that were of reputation, *viz.* to the apostles themselves, or to the chief among the Jewish Christians, rather than more openly and promiscuously to all; because when he came to Jerusalem, there were multitudes that believed, and yet continued zealous for the law, Acts xxv. 20. And the reason of this his caution was, lest he should run, or had run, in vain, i. e. lest he should stir up opposition against him, and thereby either the success of his past labours should be lessened, or his future usefulness be obstructed: For nothing more hinders the progress of the gospel, than differences of opinion about the doctrines of it; especially when they occasion quarrels and contentions among the professors of it, as they too usually do. It was enough to his purpose to have his doctrine owned by those that were of greatest authority, whether it was approved by others or no. And therefore to avoid offence, he judges it safest to communicate it privately to them, and not in publick to the whole church. And this conduct of the apostle may teach all, and especially ministers, how much need they have of prudence, and how careful they should be to use it upon all occasions, as far as is consistent with their faithfulness.

(2.) That in his practice he firmly adhered to the doctrine which he had preached. Paul was a man of resolution, and would stick to his principles; and therefore though he had Titus with him, who was a Greek, yet he would not suffer him to be circumcised, because he would not betray the doctrine of Christ, as he had preached it to the Gentiles. It does not appear, that the apostles at all insisted upon this, for though they connived at the use of circumcision among the Jewish converts, yet they were not for imposing it upon the Gentiles. But there were others that did, whom the apostle here calls *false brethren*; and concerning whom he informs us, that they were *unawares brought in*, i. e. into the church, or into their company, and that they came only to spy out their liberty which they had in Christ Jesus; or to see whether Paul would stand up in defence of that freedom from the ceremonial law, which he had taught as the doctrine of the gospel, and represented as the privilege of those who embraced the Christian religion. And their design herein was to bring them into bondage, which they would have effected, could they have gained the point they aimed at; for had they prevailed with Paul and the other apostles to have circumcised Titus, they would easily have imposed circumcision upon other Gentiles, and so have brought them under the bondage of the law of Moses. But Paul seeing their design, would by no means yield to them; he would not give place by subjection, no not for an hour. Not in this one single instance; and the reason of it was, that the truth of the gospel might continue with them: That the Gentile Christians, and particularly the Galatians, might have it preserved to them pure and entire, and not corrupted with the mixtures of Judaism, as it would have been, had he yielded in this matter. Circumcision was at that time a thing indifferent, and what in some cases might be complied with without sin; and accordingly we find even Paul himself sometimes giving way to it, as in the case of Timothy, Acts xvi. 3. But when it is insisted on as necessary, and his consenting to it, though only in a single instance, was like to be improved as giving countenance to such an imposition; he has too great a concern for the purity and liberty of the gospel to submit to it; he would not yield to those that were for the Mosaic rites and ceremonies, but would stand fast in the liberty where-with Christ hath made us free. Which conduct of his may give us occasion to observe, That what under some circumstances may lawfully be complied with, yet, when that cannot be done without betraying the truth, or giving up the liberty of the gospel, it ought to be refused.

(3.) That though he conversed with the other apostles, yet he did not receive any addition to his knowledge, or authority from them, ver. 6. By those who seemed to be somewhat, he means the other apostles, particularly James, Peter, and John, whom he afterwards mentions by names, ver. 9. And concerning these he grants; that they were deservedly had in reputation by all; that they were looked upon (and justly too) as pillars of the church, who were set not only for the ornament, but support of it; and that on some accounts they might seem to have the advantage of him, in that they had seen Christ in the flesh, which he had not, and were apostles before him, yea even while he continued a persecutor. But yet, *Whatever they were it was no matter to him.* This was no prejudice to his being equally an apostle with them; for God does not accept the persons of men on the account of any such outward advantages. As he had called them to this office, so he was at liberty to qualify others for it, and to employ them in it. And it was evident in his case, that he had done so; for in conference they added nothing to him, they told him

nothing, but what he before knew by revelation, nor could they except against the doctrine which he communicated to them: From whence it appeared, that he was not at all inferior to them, but was as much called, and qualified to be an apostle, as they themselves were.

(4.) That the issue of this conversation was, that the other apostles were fully convinced of his divine mission and authority, and accordingly acknowledged him as their fellow-apostle, ver. 7—11. They were not only satisfied with his doctrine, but they saw a divine power attending him, both in preaching it and in working miracles for the confirmation of it; that he who wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in him towards the Gentiles. And from hence they justly concluded, that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed to Paul, as the gospel of the circumcision was to Peter. And therefore, perceiving the grace that was given to him; that he was designed to the honour and office of an apostle as well as themselves; they gave unto him and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, a symbol whereby they acknowledged their equality with them, and agreed that these should go to the heathen, while they continued to preach to the circumcision; as judging it most agreeable to the mind of Christ, and most conducive to the interest of Christianity, so to divide their work. And thus this meeting ended in an entire harmony and agreement; they approved both Paul's doctrine and conduct, they were fully satisfied in him, and heartily embraced him as an apostle of Christ; and had nothing farther to add, only that they would remember the poor, which of his own accord he was very forward to do. The Christians of Judea were at that time labouring under great wants and difficulties, and the apostles out of their compassion to them, and concern for them, recommend their case to Paul, that he should use his interest with the Gentile churches to procure a supply for them. This was but a reasonable request, for if the Gentiles were made partakers of their spiritual things, it was their duty to minister to them in carnal things, as Rom. xv. 27. And he very readily falls in with it, whereby he shewed his charitable and catholic disposition; how ready he was to own the Jewish converts as brethren, though many of them could scarce allow the like favour to the converted Gentiles; and that mere difference of opinion was no reason with him, why he should not endeavour to relieve and help them. And herein he has given us an excellent pattern of Christian charity, and has taught us that we should by no means confine it to those that are just of the same sentiments with us; but be ready to extend it to all whom we have reason to look upon as the disciples of Christ.

11. But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. 12. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew, and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. 13. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. 14. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly, according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews? 15. We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, 16. Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ; that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. 17. But if while we seek to be justified by Christ, we our selves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid. 18. For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. 19. For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. 20. I am crucified with Christ: Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. 21. I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

From the account which Paul gives of what passed between him and the other apostles at Jerusalem, the Galatians might easily discern, both the falseness of what his enemies had insinuated against him, and their own folly and weakness in departing from that gospel which he had preached to them. But to give the greater weight to what he had already said, and more fully to fortify

fortify them against the insinuations of the Judaizing teachers, he acquaints them with another interview which he had with the apostle Peter at Antioch, and what passed between them there, *ver. 11—15*. Antioch was one of the chief churches of the Gentile Christians, as Jerusalem was of those Christians that turned from Judaism to the faith of Christ. There is no colour of reason for the supposition that Peter was bishop of Antioch. If he had, surely Paul would not have withstood him in his own church, as we here find he did; but, on the contrary, it is here spoken of as an occasional visit which he made thither. In their other meeting there had been a good harmony and agreement. Peter and the other apostles had both acknowledged Paul's *commission*, and approved his *doctrine*, and they parted very good friends. But in this Paul finds himself obliged to oppose Peter, for *he was to be blamed*; a plain evidence, that he was not inferior to him, and consequently of the weakness of the Pope's pretence to supremacy and infallibility, as the successor of Peter. Here we may,

(1.) Observe Peter's *fault*. When he came among the Gentile churches, he complied with them, and did eat with them, though they were not circumcised; agreeably to the instructions which were given in particular to him, *Acts x.* when he was warned by the heavenly vision, *to call nothing common or unclean*. But when there came some Jewish Christians from Jerusalem, he grew more shy of the Gentiles, only to humour them of the circumcision, and for fear of giving them offence, which doubtless was to the great grief and discouragement of the Gentile churches. Then *he withdrew, and separated himself*. And his fault herein had an ill influence upon others, for *the other Jews also dissembled with him*; though before they might be better disposed, yet now from his example they took on them to scruple eating with the Gentiles, and pretended they could not in conscience do it, because they were not circumcised. And (would you think it?) Barnabas himself, one of the apostles of the Gentiles, and one that had been instrumental in planting and watering the churches of the Gentiles, *was carried away with their dissimulation*. Here, Note, (1.) The weakness and inconstancy of the best of men when left to themselves, and how apt they are to falter in their duty to God, out of an undue regard to the pleasing of men. And, (2.) The great force of bad examples, especially the examples of great men and good men, such as are in reputation for wisdom and honour.

(2.) The *rebuke* which Paul gave him for his fault. Notwithstanding Peter's character; yet, when he observes him thus behaving himself to the great prejudice both of the *truth* of the gospel, and the *peace* of the church, he is not afraid to reprove him for it. Paul stuck resolutely to his principles, when others faltered in theirs; he was as good a Jew as any of them; for he was an Hebrew of the Hebrews, but he would magnify his office as the apostle of the Gentiles, and therefore would not see them discouraged and trampled upon. *When he saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel*; that they did not live up to that principle which the gospel taught, and which they had professed to own and embrace, *viz.* That by the death of Christ the partition-wall between Jew and Gentile was taken down, and the observation of the law of Moses was no longer in force. When he observed this, as Peter's offence was publick, so he publicly reprov'd him for it; *he said unto him before them all, If thou being a Jew, livest after the manner of the Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?* Herein one part of his conduct was a contradiction to the other: for, if he, who was a Jew, could himself sometimes dispense with the use of the ceremonial law, and live after the manner of the Gentiles; this shewed, that he did not look upon the observation of it as still necessary, even for the Jews themselves; and therefore, that he could not consistently with his own practice impose it upon the Gentile Christians. And yet, this Paul charges him with, yea represents him as *compelling* the Gentiles to live as did the Jews, not only by open force and violence; but this was the tendency of what he did; for it was in effect to signify this, that the Gentiles must comply with the Jews, or else not be admitted into Christian communion.

Paul having thus established his character and office, and sufficiently shewn that he was not inferior to any of the apostles, no not to Peter himself; from the account of the *reproof* he gave him, he takes occasion to speak of that great fundamental doctrine of the gospel, *viz.* That justification is only by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the law, (though some think all that he said to the end of the chapter, is what he said to Peter at Antioch) which doctrine he condemned Peter for his symbolizing with the Jews. For, if it was the principle of his religion, that the gospel is the instrument of our justification, and not the law; then did he very ill in countenancing them that kept up the law, and were for mixing it with faith in the business of our justification. This was the doctrine which Paul had preached among the Galatians, which he still adhered to, and which it is his great business in this epistle to mention and confirm. Now, concerning this, Paul acquaints us, (1.) With the practice of the Jewish Christians themselves, *We*, says he, *who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles*; even we that have been born and bred in the Jewish religion, and not among the impure Gentiles, *knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we ourselves have believed in*

Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law. And if we have thought it necessary to seek justification by the faith of Christ, why then should we hamper ourselves with the law? What did we believe in Christ for? Was it not that we might be justified by the faith of Christ? And if so, is it not folly to go back to the law, and to expect to be justified either by the merit of moral works, or the influence of any ceremonial sacrifices or purifications? And if it would be wrong in us, who are Jews by nature, to return to the law, and expect justification by it, would it not be much more so to require this of the Gentiles, who were never subject to it? since *by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified*. And to give the greater weight to this, he adds, *ver. 17. But if while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, Is Christ the minister of sin?* i. e. If while we seek justification by Christ alone, and teach others to do so, we ourselves are found giving countenance or indulgence to sin, or rather are accounted sinners of the Gentiles, and such as it is not fit to have communion with, unless we also observe the law of Moses; *Is Christ the minister of sin?* Will it not follow, that he is so, if he engages us to receive a doctrine that gives liberty to sin, or by which we are so far from being justified, that we remain impure sinners, and unfit to be conversed with? This he intimates would be the consequence, but he rejects it with abhorrence. *God forbid*, says he, that we should entertain such a thought of Christ, or of his *doctrine*, that thereby he should direct us into a way of justification that is defective and ineffectual, and leaves those that embrace it still unjustified, or that would give the least encouragement to sin and sinners. This would be very dishonourable to Christ, and it would be very injurious to them also. *For*, says he, *ver. 18. if I build again the things which I destroyed*; if I (or any other) who have taught that the observation of the Mosaic law is not necessary to justification, should now by word or practice teach or intimate, that it is necessary, *I make myself a transgressor*. I own myself to be still an impure sinner, and to remain under the guilt of sin, notwithstanding my faith in Christ; or I shall be liable to be charged with deceit and prevarication, and acting inconsistently with myself. Thus does the apostle argue for the doctrine of justification by faith without the works of the law, from the principles and practice of the Jewish Christians themselves, and from the consequences that would attend their departure from it; from whence it appeared that Peter and the other Jews were much in the wrong, for refusing to communicate with the Gentile Christians, and endeavouring to bring them under the bondage of the law.

(2.) He acquaints us what his own judgment and practice was.

(1.) *That he was dead to the law*. Whatever account others might make of it, yet for his part he was dead to it. He knew, that the moral law denounced a *curse against all that continue not in all things written therein to do them*; and therefore, he was dead to it, as to all hope of justification and salvation that way. And as for the ceremonial law, he also knew that was now antiquated and superseded by the coming of Christ: and therefore the substance being come, he had no longer any regard to the shadow. And he was thus dead to the law, *through the law* itself, it discovered itself to be at an end; by considering the law itself, he saw, that justification was not to be expected by the works of it, since none could perform a perfect obedience to it, and that there was now no further need of the sacrifices and purifications of it, since they were done away in Christ, and a period was put to them by his offering up himself a sacrifice for us; and therefore the more he looked into it, the more he saw that there was no occasion for keeping up that regard to it, which the Jews pleaded for. But though he was thus *dead to the law*, yet he does not look upon himself as *without law*; he had renounced all hopes of justification by the works of it, and was unwilling any longer to continue under the bondage of it: but he was far from thinking himself discharged from his duty to God; on the contrary, he was dead to the law, *that he might live unto God*. The doctrine of the gospel, which he had embraced, instead of weakening the bond of duty upon him, did but the more strengthen and confirm it; and therefore, though he was dead to the law, yet it was only in order to his living a new and better life to God, as *Rom. vii. 4, 6*. such a life, as would be more agreeable and acceptable to God, than his observation of the Mosaic law could now be, *viz.* a life of faith in Christ, and under the influence thereof of holiness and righteousness towards God. And agreeably hereunto he acquaints us,

(2.) That as he was dead to the law, so he was alive unto God through Jesus Christ, *ver. 20. I am crucified with Christ, &c.* And here in his own person he gives us an excellent description of the mysterious life of a believer. (1.) He is *crucified*, and yet he *lives*; the old man is crucified, *Rom. vi. 6*. but the new man living; he is dead to the world, and dead to the law, and yet alive to God and Christ; sin is mortified, and grace quickened. (2.) He *lives*, and yet *not he*; this is strange, *I live, and yet not I*; he lives in the exercise of grace; he has the comforts, and the triumphs of grace; and yet that grace is not from himself, but from another. Believers see themselves living in a state of dependence.

(3.) He is *crucified with Christ*, and yet *Christ lives in him*; this

this results from his mystical union with Christ, by means of which he is interested in the death of Christ, so as by virtue of that to die unto sin; and yet interested in the life of Christ, so as by virtue of that to live unto God. (4.) *He lives in the flesh, and yet lives by faith*; to outward appearance he lives as other people do, his natural life is supported as others are, but yet he hath a higher and nobler principle that supports and actuates him, viz. that of faith in Christ, and especially as eying the wonders of his *love in giving himself for him*: hence it is, that though he lives in the flesh, yet he does not live after the flesh. Note, They that have true faith do live by that faith; and the great thing which faith fastens upon, is Christ's loving us, and giving himself for us. The great evidence of Christ's loving us, is his giving himself for us; and this is that we are chiefly concerned to mix faith with, in order to our living to him.

The apostle concludes this discourse with acquainting us, that by the doctrine of justification by faith in Christ, without the works of the law, which he asserted, and others opposed; he avoided two great difficulties, which the contrary opinion was loaded with, viz. (1.) *That he did not frustrate the grace of God*, which the doctrine of justification by the works of the law did; for as he argues, *Rom. xi. 6. If it be of works, it is no more of grace.* (2.) *That he did not frustrate the death of Christ*, whereas *if righteousness come by the law*, then it must follow *that Christ is dead in vain*; for if we look for salvation by the law of Moses, then we render the death of Christ needless: for to what purpose should he be appointed to die, if we might have been saved without it?

C H A P. III.

The apostle, in this chapter, (1.) Reproves the Galatians for their folly in suffering themselves to be drawn away from the faith of the gospel; and endeavours, from several considerations, to impress them with a sense of it. (2.) He proves the doctrine which he had reproved them for departing from, viz. That of justification by faith without the works of the law. (1.) From the example of Abraham's justification. (2.) From the nature and tenor of the law. (3.) From the express testimony of the Old Testament. And, (4.) From the stability of the covenant of God with Abraham. And lest any should hereupon say, Wherefore then serveth the law? He answers, (1.) It was added because of transgressions. (2.) It was given to convince the world of the necessity of a Saviour. (3.) It was designed as a school-master to bring us to Christ. And then he concludes the chapter, by acquainting us with the privilege of Christians under the gospel-state.

1. **FOOLISH** Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? 2. This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? 3. Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? 4. Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain. 5. He therefore that ministrereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

The apostle is here dealing with those that having embraced the faith of Christ, yet still continued to seek for justification by the works of the law, i. e. who depended upon their own obedience to the moral precepts as their righteousness before God; and wherein that was defective, had recourse to the legal sacrifices and purifications to make it up. These he first sharply reproves, and then endeavours, by the evidence of truth, to convince them. And this is the right method, when we reprove any for a fault or an error, to convince them that it is an error, that it is a fault.

(1.) He reproves them, and the reproof is very close and warm; he calls them *foolish Galatians*, ver. 1. Though as Christians they were wisdom's children, yet as corrupt Christians they were foolish children. Yea, he asks, *Who hath bewitched you?* whereby he represents them as enchanted by the arts and snares of their seducing teachers, and so far deluded as to act very unlike themselves; and that wherein their folly and infatuation appeared, was, that *they did not obey the truth*, i. e. they did not adhere to the gospel way of justification, wherein they had been taught, and which they had professed to embrace. Note, 1. It is not enough to know the truth, and to say we believe it; but we must obey it too, we must heartily submit to it, and stedfastly abide by it. And, 2. That those are spiritually bewitched, who, when the truth as it is in Jesus is plainly set before them, will not thus obey it. Several things proved and aggravated the folly of these Christians.

(1.) *Jesus Christ had been evidently set forth as crucified among them*; that is, they had had the doctrine of the cross preached to them, and the sacrament of the Lord's supper administered among them, in both which Christ crucified had been set before them.

Now, it was the greatest madness that could be for them, who had had acquaintance with such sacred mysteries, and admittance to such great solemnities, not to obey the truth which was thus published to them, and signed and sealed in that ordinance. Note, The consideration of the honours and privileges we have been admitted to as Christians, should shame us out of the folly of apostasy and backsliding.

(2.) He appeals to the experiences they had had of the working of the Spirit upon their souls, ver. 2. he puts them in mind, that upon their becoming Christians *they had received the Spirit*, that many of them at least had been made partakers, not only of the sanctifying influences, but of the miraculous gifts of the holy Spirit, which were eminent proofs of the truth of the Christian religion, and the several doctrines of it, and especially of this, that justification is by Christ only, and not by the works of the law, which was one of the peculiar and fundamental principles of it. And to convince them of the folly of their departing from this doctrine, he desires to know how they came by these gifts and graces; was it *by the works of the law*, i. e. the preaching the necessity of these in order to justification? This they could not say, for that doctrine had not then been preached to them, nor had they, as Gentiles, any pretence to justification that way. Or was it by the *hearing of faith*, i. e. the preaching of the doctrine of faith in Christ, as the only way of justification? This, if they would say the truth, they were obliged to own, and therefore must be very unreasonable, if they should reject a doctrine, the good effects of which they had had such experience of. Note, 1. That it is usually by the ministry of the gospel, that the Spirit is communicated to persons. And, 2. That they are very unwise, who suffer themselves to be turned away from that ministry and doctrine which has been blessed to their spiritual advantage.

(3.) He calls upon them to consider their past and present conduct, and from thence to judge whether they were not acting very weakly and unreasonably, ver. 3, 4. he tells them, that *they had begun in the Spirit*, but now were seeking *to be made perfect by the flesh*; they had embraced the doctrine of the gospel, by means of which they had received the Spirit, and wherein only the true way of justification is revealed. And thus they had begun well; but now they were turning to the law, and expecting to be advanced to higher degrees of perfection, by adding the observation of it to faith in Christ, in order to their justification, which could end in nothing but their shame and disappointment: for this, instead of being an *improvement* upon the gospel, was really a *perversion* of it; and while they sought to be justified in this way, they were so far from being more perfect Christians, that they were more in danger of becoming no Christians at all; hereby they were pulling down with one hand what they had built with the other, and undoing what they had hitherto done in Christianity. Yea, he farther puts them in mind, that they had not only embraced the Christian doctrine, but suffered for it too; and therefore their folly would be the more aggravated, if now they should desert it: for in this case all that they had suffered would be in vain, it would appear that they had been foolish in suffering for what they now deserted, and their sufferings would be altogether in vain, and of no advantage to them. Note, 1. It is the folly of apostates, that they lose the benefit of all they have done in religion, or suffered for it. And, 2. That it is very sad for any to live in an age of services and sufferings, of sabbaths, sermons and sacraments, in vain; in this case former righteousness shall not be mentioned.

(4.) He puts them in mind, that they had had ministers among them (and particularly himself) who came with a divine seal and commission; for they had *ministered the Spirit to them, and wrought miracles among them*: And he appeals to them whether they did it *by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith*; whether the doctrine that was preached by them, and confirmed by the miraculous gifts and operations of the Spirit, was that of justification by the works of the law, or by the faith of Christ; they very well knew, that it was not the former, but the latter; and therefore must needs be inexcusable in forsaking a doctrine which had been so signally owned and attested, and exchanging it for one, that had received no such attestations.

6. Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. 7. Know ye therefore, that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. 8. And the scripture foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. 9. So then they which be of faith, are blessed with faithful Abraham. 10. For as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. 11. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. 12. And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doth them, shall live in them.

13. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: 14. That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. 15. Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; though it be but a mans covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth or addeth thereto. 16. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ. 17. And this I say, *that* the covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law which was four hundred and thirty years after cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. 18. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise.

The apostle having reprov'd the Galatians for their not obeying the truth, and endeavour'd to impress them with a sense of their folly herein; in these verses he largely proves the doctrine which he had reprov'd them for the rejecting of; namely, that of justification by faith without the works of the law. This he does several ways.

(1.) From the example of Abraham's justification. Which argument this same apostle uses, *Rom. iv. Abraham believed God, and that was accounted to him for righteousness*, ver. 6. i. e. his faith fastened upon the word and promise of God, and upon his believing he was owned and accepted of God as a righteous man: and as on this account he is represented as the Father of the faithful; so the apostle would have us to know, *that they who are of faith are the children of Abraham*, ver. 7. not according to the flesh, but according to the promise; and consequently that they are justified in the same way that he was. Abraham was justified by faith, and so are they. And to confirm this, the apostle acquaints us, that the promise made to Abraham, *Gen. xii. 3. In thee shall all nations be blessed*, had a reference hereunto, ver. 8. The scripture is said to *foresee*, because he that indited the scripture did foresee that God would justify the heathen world in the way of faith; and therefore in Abraham, i. e. in the seed of Abraham, which is Christ, not the Jews only, but the Gentiles also should be blessed; not only blessed in the seed of Abraham, but blessed as Abraham was, being justified as he was. This the apostle calls *preaching the gospel to Abraham*; and from thence infers, ver. 9. that *they who are of faith*, i. e. true believers, of what nation soever they be, *are blessed with faithful Abraham*. They are blessed with Abraham the father of the faithful, by the promise made to him, and therefore by faith as he was. It was through faith in the promise of God, that he was blessed, and it is only in the same way that others obtain this privilege.

(2.) He shews, that we cannot be justified but by faith fastening on the gospel, because the law condemns us. If we put ourselves upon trial in that court, and stand to the sentence of it, we are certainly cast, and lost, and undone; *for as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse*, i. e. as many as depend upon the merit of their own works as their righteousness, that plead not guilty, and insist upon their own justification, the cause will certainly go against them; *for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them*, ver. 10. and *Deut. xxvii. 26*. The condition of life by the law is perfect, personal and perpetual obedience; the language of it is, *Do this and live*; or as ver. 12. *The man that doth them shall live in them*: and for every failure herein the law denounces a curse. Unless our obedience be *universal*, continuing in all things that are written in the book of the law, and unless it be *perpetual* too; if in any instance at any time we fail and come short, we fall under the curse of the law. The curse is wrath revealed, and ruin threatened. It is a separation unto all evil, and this is in full force, power, and virtue against all sinners, and therefore against all men; for all have sinned and are become guilty before God. And if as transgressors of the law, we are under the curse of it, it must be a vain thing to look for justification by it. But though this is not to be expected from the law; yet the apostle afterwards acquaints us, that there is a way open to our escaping this curse, and regaining the favour of God, viz. through faith in Christ, who as he says, ver. 13. *has redeemed us from the curse of the law*, &c. A strange method it was which Christ took to redeem us from the curse of the law, it was *by his being himself made a curse for us*; being made sin for us, he was made a curse for us; not separated from God, but laid for the present under that infamous token of the divine displeasure, which the law of Moses had put a particular brand upon, *Deut. xxi. 23*. And the design of this was, *that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ*: That all who believed on Christ, whether Jews or Gentiles, might become heirs of Abraham's blessing, and particularly of that great *promise of the Spirit*, which was peculiarly reserved for the times of the gospel. And from hence it

appeared, that it was not by putting themselves under the law, but by faith in Christ, that they became the people of God, and heirs of the promise. Here, Note, (1.) The misery, which as sinners we are sunk into; we are under the curse and condemnation of the law. (2.) The love and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ towards us; he has submitted to be made a curse for us, that he might redeem us from the curse of the law. (3.) The happy prospect which we now have through him, not only of escaping the curse, but of inheriting the blessing. And, (4.) That it is only through faith in him, that we can hope to obtain this favour.

(3.) To prove that justification is by faith, and not by the works of the law; the apostle alledges the express testimony of the Old Testament, ver. 11. The place referred to is *Habak. ii. 4*. where it is said, *The just shall live by faith*; it is again quoted, *Rom. i. 17*. and *Heb. x. 38*. And the design of it is to shew, that they are only such as are *just* or righteous, who do truly *live*, who are freed from death and wrath, and restored into a state of life in the favour of God; and that it is only through faith, that persons become righteous, and as such obtain this life and happiness; that they are accepted of God and enabled to live to him now, and are entitled to an eternal life in the enjoyment of him hereafter. And from hence the apostle says, *it is evident, that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God*. Whatever he may be in the account of others, yet he is not so in the sight of God, *for the law is not of faith*; that says nothing concerning faith in the business of justification, nor does it give life to those that believe; but the language of it is, *That the man that doth them shall live in them*, as *Lev. xviii. 5*. It requires perfect obedience as the condition of life, and therefore now can by no means be the rule of our justification: and this argument of the apostle's may give us occasion to remark, That justification by faith is no new doctrine, but what was established and taught in the church of God, long before the times of the gospel. Yea, it is the only way wherein any sinners ever were or can be justified.

(4.) To this purpose the apostle urges the stability of the covenant which God made with Abraham, which was not vacated or disannulled by the giving of the law to Moses, ver. 15, &c. Faith had the precedence of the law, for Abraham was justified by faith. It was a promise that he built upon, and promises are the proper objects of faith. God entered into covenant with Abraham, ver. 8. and this covenant was firm and steady; even mens covenants are so, and therefore much more his. When a deed is executed, or articles of agreement sealed, both parties are bound, and it is too late then to settle things otherwise; and therefore it is not to be supposed that by the subsequent law, the covenant of God should be vacated. The original word *διαθήκη* signifies both a covenant and a testament. Now, the promise made to Abraham, was rather a testament than a covenant. When a testament is become of force by the death of the testator, it is not capable of being altered; and therefore the promise that was given to Abraham, being of the nature of a testament, it remains firm and unalterable. But if it should be said, that a grant or testament may be defeated for want of persons to claim the benefit of it, therefore ver. 16. he shews, that there is no danger of that in this case. Abraham is dead, and the prophets are dead, but the covenant is made with Abraham *and his seed*. And he gives us a very surprizing exposition of that. We would have thought it had been meant only of the people of the Jews. Nay, saith the apostle, it is in the singular number, and points at a single person, *that seed is Christ*. So that the covenant is still in force; for Christ abideth for ever in his person, and in his spiritual seed, that are his by faith. And if it be objected, that the law which was given by Moses, did disannul this covenant, because that insisted so much upon works, and there was so little in it of faith, or of the promised Messiah; he answers, that the subsequent law could not disannul the precedent covenant or promise: for, ver. 18. *If the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise*; but, says he, *God gave it to Abraham by promise*; and therefore, it would be inconsistent with his holiness, wisdom, and faithfulness, by any subsequent act to set aside the promise, and so alter the way of justification, which he had thus established. If the inheritance was given to Abraham by promise, and thereby entailed upon his spiritual seed, we may be sure God would not retract that promise; for he is not a man that he should repent.

19. Wherefore then *serveth* the law? it was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come, to whom the promise was made; *and it was ordained by angels in the hand a mediator*. 20. Now a mediator is not *a mediator* of one; but God is one. 21. *Is the law then against the promises of God?* God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. 22. But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. 23. But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should

should afterwards be revealed. 24. Wherefore the law was our school-master to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. 25. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a school-master. 26. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. 27. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ. 28. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female : for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. 29. And if ye be Christs, then are ye Abrahams seed, and heirs according to the promise.

The apostle having just before been speaking of the promise made to Abraham, and representing that as the rule of our justification and not the law, lest they should think he did too much derogate from the law, and render it altogether useless, he from thence takes occasion to discourse of the design and tendency of it, and to acquaint us for what purposes it was given. It might be asked, if that promise was sufficient for salvation, wherefore then serveth the law ? or why did God give the law by Moses ? To this he answers :

1. That the law was added because of transgressions, ver. 19. It was not designed to disannul the promise, and to establish a different way of justification from that which was settled by the promise : But it was added to it, annexed on purpose to be subservient to it ; and it was so because of transgressions. The Israelites, though they were chosen to be God's peculiar people, yet were sinners as well as others ; and therefore the law was given to convince them of their sin, and of their obnoxiousness to the divine displeasure on the account of it ; for by the law is the knowledge of sin, Rom. iii. 20. and the law entered that sin might abound, Rom. v. 20. And it was also intended to restrain them from the commission of sin, to put an awe upon their minds, and be a curb upon their lusts, that they should not run into that excess of riot which they were naturally inclined to ; and yet at the same time it was designed to direct them unto the true and only way whereby sin was to be expiated, and wherein they might obtain the pardon of it, viz. through the death and sacrifice of Christ, which was the special use for which the law of sacrifices and purifications was given.

And the apostle adds, that the law was given for this purpose, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made, i. e. either till Christ should come, the principal seed referred to in the promise, as he had before shewn, or till the gospel dispensation should take place, when Jews and Gentiles, without distinction, should, upon believing, become the seed of Abraham. The law was added because of transgressions, till this fulness of time, or this complete dispensation was come. But when the seed was come, and a fuller discovery of divine grace in the promise was made, then the law, as given by Moses, was to cease ; that covenant being found faulty, was to give place to another, and a better, Heb. viii. 7, 8. And though the law, considered as the law of nature, is always in force, and still continues to be of use, to convince men of sin, and to restrain them from it ; yet we are now no longer under the bondage and terror of that legal covenant. The law then was not intended to discover another way of justification, different from that revealed by the promise, but only to lead men to see their need of the promise, by shewing them the sinfulness of sin, and to point them to Christ, through whom alone they could be pardoned and justified.

And as a farther proof that the law was not designed to vacate the promise, the apostle adds, That it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. It was given to different persons, and in a different manner from the promise, and therefore for different purposes. The promise was made to Abraham, and all his spiritual seed, including believers of all nations, even of the Gentiles as well as Jews ; but the law was given to the Israelites as a peculiar people, and separated from the rest of the world. And whereas the promise was given immediately by God himself, the law was given by the ministry of angels, and the hand of a mediator. And from hence it appeared that the law could not be designed to set aside the promise ; for ver. 20. A mediator is not a mediator of one, i. e. of one party only ; but God is one, i. e. but one party in the promise or covenant made with Abraham : and therefore it is not to be supposed, that by a transaction which passed only between him and the nation of the Jews, he should make void a promise which he had long before made to Abraham and all his spiritual seed, whether Jews or Gentiles. This would not have been consistent with his wisdom, or with his truth and faithfulness. Moses was only a mediator between God and the Israelites, not between God and the spiritual seed of Abraham ; and therefore the law that was given by him could not affect the promise made to them, much less be subversive of it.

2. The law was given to convince men of the necessity of a Saviour. The apostle asks, ver. 21. as what some might be ready to object : Is the law then against the promises of God ? do they really clash and interfere with each other ? or do you not set the covenant with Abraham, and the law of Moses, at variance with one another ? To this he answers, God forbid ; he was far from entertaining such a thought, nor could it be inferred

from what he had said ; the law is by no means inconsistent with the promise, but subservient to it, as the design of it is to discover mens transgressions, and to shew them the need they have of a better righteousness than that of the law. That consequence would much rather follow from their doctrine than from his : for if there had been a law given that could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law ; and in that case the promise would have been superfluous, and rendered useless. But that in our present state could not be, for the scripture hath concluded all under sin, ver. 22. or declared that all, both Jew and Gentile, are in a state of guilt, and therefore unable to attain to righteousness and justification by the works of the law. That discovered their wounds, but could not afford them a remedy. It shewed that they were guilty, because it appointed sacrifices and purifications, which were manifestly insufficient to take away sin ; and therefore the great design of it was, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe ; that being convinced of their guilt, and the insufficiency of the law to effect a righteousness for them, they might be persuaded to believe on Christ, and so obtain the benefit of the promise.

3. The law was designed for a school-master to bring men to Christ, ver. 24. In the foregoing verse, the apostle acquaints us with the state of the Jews under the Mosaic oecconomy ; that before faith came, or before Christ appeared, and the doctrine of justification by faith in him, was more fully discovered, they were kept under the law, obliged on severe penalties to a strict observance of the various precepts of it ; and at that time they were shut up, held under the terror and discipline of it as prisoners in a state of confinement : and the design of this was, that hereby they might be disposed more readily to embrace the faith which should afterwards be revealed, or be persuaded to accept Christ when he came into the world, and to fall in with that better dispensation he was to introduce, whereby they were to be freed from that bondage and servitude, and brought into a state of greater light and liberty. Now in that state he tells them, that the law was their school-master to bring them to Christ, that they might be justified by faith. As it declared the mind and will of God concerning them, and at the same time denounced a curse against them for every failure in their duty ; so it was proper to convince them of their lost and undone condition in themselves, and to let them see the weakness and insufficiency of their own righteousness to recommend them to God. And as it obliged them to a variety of sacrifices, &c. which though they could not of themselves take away sin, yet were typical of Christ, and of the great sacrifice which he was to offer up for the expiation of it ; so it directed them (though in a more dark and obscure manner) to him, as their only relief and refuge. And thus it was their school-master, to instruct and govern them in their state of minority, or as the word παιδαγωγός most properly signifies, their servant to lead and conduct them to Christ, (as children were wont to be led to school by those servants that had the care of them) that they might be more fully instructed by him as their school-master, in the true way of justification and salvation, which is only by faith in him, and which he was appointed to give the fullest and clearest discoveries of. But lest it should be said, if the law was of this use and service under the Jewish, why may it not continue to be so under the Christian state too ? the apostle adds, ver. 25. that after faith is come, and the gospel dispensation had taken place, under which Christ, and the way of pardon and life through faith in him, is set in the clearest light ; We are no longer under a school-master, we have no such need of the law to direct us to him, as there was then.

Thus the apostle acquaints us, for what uses and purposes the law served ; and from what he says concerning this matter, we may observe, 1. The goodness of God to his people of old, in giving the law to them : for though in comparison of the gospel-state, it was a dispensation of darkness and terror, yet it furnished them with sufficient means and helps, both to direct them in their duty to God, and to encourage their hopes in him. 2. The great fault and folly of the Jews, in mistaking the design of the law, and abusing it to a very different purpose from that which God intended in the giving of it : for they expected to be justified by the works of it ; whereas it was never designed to be the rule of their justification, but only a means of convincing them of their guilt and of their need of a Saviour, and of directing them to Christ and faith in him, as the only way of obtaining this privilege. See Rom. ix. 31, 32. and Chap. x. 3, 4. 3. The great advantage of the gospel-state above the legal, under which we not only enjoy a clearer discovery of divine grace and mercy than was afforded to the Jews of old, but are also freed from the state of bondage and terror under which they were held. We are not now treated as children in a state of minority, but as sons grown up to a full age, who are admitted to greater freedoms, and instated in larger privileges than they were. This the apostle enlarges upon in the following verses.

For having shewn for what intent the law was given, in the close of the chapter he acquaints us with our privilege by Christ : where he particularly declares,

1. That we are the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, ver. 26. And here we may observe, (1.) The great and excellent privilege which under the gospel real Christians enjoy, they are

are the children of God; they are no longer accounted servants but sons; they are not now kept at such a distance, and under such restraints as the Jews were, but are allowed a nearer and freer access to God than was granted to them; yea, they are admitted into the number, and have a right to all the privileges of his children. (2.) How they come to obtain this privilege, and that is by faith in Christ Jesus; having accepted him as their Lord and Saviour, and relying on him alone for justification and salvation, they are hereupon admitted into this happy relation to God, and are intitled to the privileges of it: for John i. 12. *As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.*

And this faith in Christ, whereby they became the children of God, he acquaints us, ver. 27. was what they professed in baptism; for, he adds, *as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ*: having in baptism professed their faith in him, they were thereby devoted to him, and had, as it were, put on his livery, and declared themselves to be his servants and disciples; and being thus become the members of Christ, they were through him owned and accounted as the children of God. Here note, (1.) That baptism is now the solemn rite of our admission into the Christian church, as circumcision was into that of the Jews. Our Lord Jesus appointed it to be so in the commission he gave to his apostles, *Matt. xxviii. 19.* and accordingly it was their practice to baptize those whom they had discipled to the Christian faith; and perhaps the apostle might take notice of their baptism here, and of their becoming the children of God through faith in Christ professed therein, to obviate a farther objection, which the false teachers might be apt to urge in favour of circumcision. They might be ready to say, though it should be allowed that the law as given at mount Sinai was abrogated by the coming of Christ the promised seed; yet what reason was there that circumcision should be set aside too, when that was given to Abraham together with the promise, and long before the giving of the law by Moses? But this difficulty is sufficiently removed, when the apostle says, *That they who are baptized into Christ, have put on Christ*: for from thence it appears, that under the gospel baptism comes in the room of circumcision, and that they who by baptism are devoted to Christ, and do sincerely believe in him, are to all intents and purposes as much admitted into the privileges of the Christian state, as the Jews were by circumcision into those of the legal, *Phil. iii. 3.* and therefore there was no reason why the use of that should still be continued. Note, (2.) That in our baptism we put on Christ, therein we profess our discipleship to him, and are obliged to behave ourselves as his faithful servants: being baptized into Christ we are baptized into his death, that as he died and rose again, so in conformity thereunto we should die unto sin, and walk in newness of life, *Rom. vi. 3, 4.* and it would be of great advantage to us, did we oftner remember this.

2. That this privilege of being the children of God, and of being by baptism devoted to Christ, is now enjoyed in common by all real Christians. The law indeed made a difference between Jew and Greek, giving the Jews on many accounts the preeminence: that also made a difference between bond and free, master and servant, and between male and female, the males being circumcised; but it is not so now, they all stand on the same level, and are all one in Christ Jesus: as the one is not accepted on the account of any national or personal advantages he may enjoy above the other, so neither is the other rejected for the want of them; but all that sincerely believe on Christ, of what nation or sex, or condition, soever they be, are accepted of him, and become the children of God through faith in him.

3. That being Christ's, we are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. Their Judaizing teachers would make them believe, that they must be circumcised and keep the law of Moses, or they could not be saved: No, says the apostle, there is no need of that; for if ye be Christ's, if you sincerely believe on him, who is the promised seed, in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed, you thereby become the true seed of Abraham, the father of the faithful, and as such are heirs according to the promise, and consequently are intitled to the great blessings and privileges of it.

And therefore upon the whole, since it appeared that justification was not to be attained by the works of the law, but only by faith in Christ, and that the law of Moses was a temporary institution, and was given for such purposes as were only subservient to, and not subversive of the promise, and that now under the gospel Christians enjoy much greater and better privileges than the Jews did under that dispensation; it must needs follow that they were very unreasonable and unwise, in hearkening to those who at once endeavoured to deprive them of the truth and liberty of the gospel.

CHAP. IV.

The apostle in this chapter is still carrying on the same general design as in the former, viz. to recover these Christians from the impressions made upon them by the Judaizing teachers, and to represent their weakness and folly in suffering themselves to be drawn

away from the gospel doctrine of justification, and to be deprived of their freedom from the bondage of the law of Moses. To this purpose he makes use of various considerations, such as, (1.) The great excellence of the gospel-state above the legal, ver. 1—8. (2.) The happy change that was made in them at their conversion, ver. 8—12. (3.) The affection they had had for him and his ministry, ver. 12—17. (4.) The character of the false teachers by whom they had been perverted, ver. 17, 18. (5.) The very tender affection he had for them, ver. 19, 20. (6.) The history of Isaac and Ishmael, by a comparison taken from which he illustrates the difference between such as rested in Christ, and such as trusted in the law. And in all these, as he uses great plainness and faithfulness with them, so he expresses the tenderest concern for them.

1. NOW I say, that the heir as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be Lord of all; 2. But is under tutors and governors, until the time appointed of the father. 3. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world: 4. But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law, 5. To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. 6. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. 7. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

In this chapter the apostle deals plainly with those that hearkened to the Judaizing teachers, who cried up the law of Moses in competition with the gospel of Christ, and endeavoured to bring them under the bondage of it; and to convince them of their folly, and to rectify their mistake herein, in these verses he prosecutes the comparison of a child under age, which he had touched upon in the foregoing chapter; and from thence shews what great advantages we have now under the gospel, above what they had under the law. And here,

(1.) He acquaints us with the state of the Old Testament church, it was like a child under age, and it was used accordingly, being kept in a state of darkness and bondage, in comparison of that greater light and liberty which we enjoy under the gospel. That was indeed a dispensation of grace, and yet it was comparatively a dispensation of darkness: for as the heir in his minority is under tutors and governors till the time appointed of his Father, by whom he is educated and instructed in those things which at present he knows little of the meaning of, though afterwards they are likely to be of great use to him; so it was with the Old Testament church, the Mosaick oeconomy which they were under was what they could not fully understand the meaning of; for, as the apostle says, *2 Cor. iii. 13. They could not stedfastly look to the end of that which was abolished.* But to the church when grown up to maturity in gospel-days, it becomes of great use. And as that was a dispensation of darkness, so of bondage too; for they were in bondage under the elements of the world, being tied to a great number of burdensome rites and observances, by which, as by a kind of first rudiments, they were taught and instructed, and whereby they were kept in a state of subjection, like a child under tutors and governors. The church then lay more under the character of a servant, being obliged to do every thing according to the command of God, without being fully acquainted with the reason of it; but the service under the gospel appears to be more reasonable than that was. The time appointed of the Father being come, when the church was to arrive at its full age, now that darkness and bondage, under which it before lay, is removed, and we are under a dispensation of greater light and liberty.

(2.) He acquaints us with the much happier state of Christians under the gospel-dispensation, ver. 4, 5, 6, 7. *When the fulness of time was come*, the time appointed of the Father, when he would put an end to the legal dispensation, and set up another and a better in the room of it: *He sent forth his Son*, &c. The person who was employed to introduce this new dispensation, was no other than the Son of God himself, the only begotten of the Father; who, as he had been prophesied of, and promised from the foundation of the world, so in due time was manifested for this purpose. He, in pursuance of the great design he had undertaken, submitted to be made of a woman; there is his incarnation, and to be made under the law, there is his subjection. He who was truly God, yet for our sakes became man; and he who was Lord of all, yet consented to come into a state of subjection, and to take upon him the form of a servant; and one great end of all this was, *To redeem them that were under the law*; to save us from that intolerable yoke, and to appoint gospel-ordinances more rational and easy. He had indeed something more and greater in his view, in coming into the world, than merely to deliver us from the bondage of the ceremonial law; for he came into our nature, and consented to suffer and die for us,

us, that hereby he might redeem us from the wrath of God, and from the curse of the moral law, which, as sinners, we all lay under. But that was one end of it, and a mercy reserved to be bestowed at the time of his manifestation; then the more servile state of the church was to come to a period, and a better to succeed in the place of it; for he was sent to redeem us, *that we might receive the adoption of sons*, that we might no longer be accounted and treated as servants, but as sons grown up to maturity, who are allowed greater freedoms, and admitted to larger privileges than while they were under tutors and governors. This the course of the apostle's argument leads us to take notice of, as one thing intended by this expression, though no doubt it may also be understood as signifying that gracious adoption which the gospel so often speaks of as the privilege of those who believe in Christ. Israel was God's son, his first-born, *Rom. ix. 4.* But now under the gospel particular believers receive the adoption; and as an earnest and evidence of it, they have together therewith the Spirit of adoption, putting them upon the duty of prayer, and enabling them in prayer to eye God as a Father; for as it follows, *ver. 6. Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.* And hereupon, *ver. 7.* the apostle concludes this argument, by adding, *Wherefore thou art no more a servant but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ, i. e.* Now under the gospel-state we are no longer under the servitude of the law, but upon our believing in Christ become the Sons of God; we are thereupon accepted of him, and adopted by him; and being the *sons*, we are also *heirs* of God, and are intitled to the heavenly inheritance, as he also reasons, *Rom. viii. 17.* And therefore it must needs be the greatest weakness and folly to turn back to the law, and to seek justification by the works of it. From what the apostle says in these verses, we may observe,

(1.) The wonders of divine love and mercy towards us, particularly of God the Father in sending his Son into the world to redeem and save us; of the Son of God in submitting so low, and suffering so much for us in pursuance of that design; and of the holy Spirit, in condescending to dwell in the hearts of believers for such gracious purposes.

(2.) The great and invaluable advantages which Christians enjoy under the gospel: for, (1.) We receive *the adoption of sons*. Whence note, That it is the great privilege which believers have through Christ, that they are adopted children of the God of heaven. We who by nature are children of wrath and disobedience, are become, by grace, children of love. (2.) We receive *the Spirit of adoption*. Note, (1.) That all that have the privilege of adoption, have the Spirit of adoption; all that are received into the number, partake of the nature of the children of God, for he will have all his children to resemble him. (2.) That the Spirit of adoption is always the Spirit of prayer, and it is our duty in prayer to eye God as a Father. Christ hath taught us in prayer to eye God as our Father in heaven. (3.) If we are his Sons, then his heirs. It is not so among men, with whom the eldest son is heir; but all God's children are heirs; they that have the nature of sons shall have the inheritance of sons.

8. Howbeit, then when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods. 9. But now after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? 10. Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. 11. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.

In these verses the apostle puts them in mind of what they were before their conversion to the faith of Christ, and what a blessed change their conversion had made upon them; and from thence endeavours to convince them of their great weakness in hearkening to those that would bring them under the bondage of the law of Moses.

(1.) He reminds them of their past state and behaviour, and what they were before the gospel was preached to them; then *they knew not God*, they were grossly ignorant of the true God, and the way wherein he is to be worshipped: and at that time they were under the worst of slaveries, for *they did service to them which by nature were no gods*; they were employed in a great number of superstitious and idolatrous services to those, who though they were accounted gods, yet were really no gods, but meer creatures, and perhaps of their own making, and therefore were utterly unable to hear and help them. Note (1.) That those who are ignorant of the true God cannot but be inclined to false gods: They who forsook the God that made the world, rather than be without gods, worshipped such as they themselves made. (2.) That religious worship is due to none but to him who is by nature God; for when the apostle blames the doing service to such as by nature were no gods, he plainly shews, that he only who is by nature God, is the proper object of our religious worship.

(2.) He calls upon them to consider the happy change that was made in them by the preaching of the gospel among them. Now

they had known God, they were brought to the knowledge of the true God, and of his Son Jesus Christ, whereby they were recovered out of that ignorance and bondage under which they before lay, or rather were known of God; this happy change in their state, whereby they were turned from idols to the living God, and through Christ had received the adoption of sons, was not owing to themselves, but to him. It was the effect of his free and rich grace towards them, and as such they ought to account it; and therefore hereby they were laid under the greater obligation to adhere to the liberty wherewith he had made them free. Note, That all our acquaintance with God begins with him, we know him, because we are known of him.

(3.) From hence he infers the unreasonableness and madness of their suffering themselves to be brought again into a state of bondage; he speaks of it with surprize and deep concern of mind, that such as they should do so, *How turn ye again, &c.* says he, *ver. 9.* how is it that you who have been taught to worship God the gospel way, should now be persuaded to comply with the ceremonial way of worship? that you who have been acquainted with a dispensation of light, liberty, and love, as that of the gospel is, should now submit to a dispensation of darkness, and bondage, and terror, as that of the law is? This they had the less reason for, since they had never been under the law of Moses, as the Jews had been; and therefore on this account they were more inexcusable than the Jews themselves, who might be supposed to have some fondness for that which had been of so long standing among them. Besides, what they suffered themselves to be brought into bondage to, were but *weak and beggarly elements*, such things as had no power in them to cleanse the soul, or to afford any solid satisfaction to the mind, and which were only designed for that state of pupillage under which the church had been, but which was now come to a period; and therefore their weakness and folly was the more aggravated in submitting to them, and in symbolizing with the Jews in observing their various festivals, here signified by *days, and months, and times, and years*. Here note, (1.) That it is possible for those who have made great professions of religion, to be afterwards drawn into very great defections from the purity and simplicity of it, for this was the case of these Christians. And (2.) That the more mercy God has shewn to any in bringing them into an acquaintance with the gospel, and the liberties and privileges of it, the greater is their sin and folly in suffering themselves to be deprived of them; for this the apostle lays a special stress upon, that after they had known God, or rather were known of him, they desired to be in bondage under the weak and beggarly elements of the law.

(4.) Hereupon he expresses his fears concerning them, *lest he had bestowed on them labour in vain*. He had been at a great deal of pains about them, in preaching the gospel to them, and endeavouring to confirm them in the faith and liberty of it; but now they were giving up these, and thereby rendring his labour among them fruitless and ineffectual, and this he could not but be deeply affected with the thoughts of. Note, 1. That a great deal of the labour of faithful ministers is labour in vain, and that when it is so, it cannot but be a great grief to those who desire the salvation of souls. Note, 2. That the labour of ministers is in vain upon those that begin in the Spirit, and end in the flesh, who though they seem to set out well, yet afterwards turn aside from the way of the gospel. Note, 3. That those will have a great deal to answer for upon whom the faithful ministers of Jesus Christ bestow labour in vain.

12. Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am; for I am as ye are: ye have not injured me at all. 13. Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh, I preached the gospel unto you at the first. 14. And my temptation which was in the flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. 15. Where is then the blessedness you spake of? for I bear you record, that if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me. 16. Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?

That these Christians might be the more ashamed of their defection from the truth of the gospel which Paul had preached to them, he here reminds them of the great affection they formerly had for him and his ministry, and puts them upon considering how very unsuitable their present behaviour was to what they then professed. And here we may observe,

1. How affectionately he addresses himself to them, he styles them *brethren*, though he knew their hearts were in a great measure alienated from him. He desires that all resentments might be laid aside, and that they would bear the same temper of mind towards him which he did to them; he would have them *to be as he was, for he was as they were*, and moreover tells them that *they had not injured him at all*. He had no quarrel with them upon his own account; though in blaming their conduct, he had expressed himself with some warmth and concern of mind, yet he assures them that was not owing to any sense of personal injury

injury or affront, as they might be ready to think, but proceeded wholly from a zeal for the truth and purity of the gospel, and their welfare and happiness. Thus he endeavours to mollify their spirits towards him, that so they might be the better disposed to receive the admonitions he was giving them; and hereby teaches us, that in our reproving others, we should take care to convince them, that our reproofs do not proceed from any private pique or resentment, but from a sincere regard to the honour of God and religion, and their truest welfare; for then they are like to be most successful, when they appear to be most disinterested.

2. How he magnifies their former affection to him, that hereby they might be the more ashamed of their present behaviour towards him. To this purpose, (1.) He puts them in mind of the difficulty under which he laboured, when he came first among them. *Ye know, says he, how, through infirmity of the flesh, I preached the gospel unto you at the first.* What this infirmity of the flesh was, which in the following words he expresses by *his temptation that was in his flesh*, though no doubt it was well known to these Christians to whom he wrote, yet now we can have no certain knowledge of it: some take it to have been the persecutions which he suffered for the gospel's sake; others to have been something in his person or manner of speaking, which might render his ministry less grateful and acceptable, referring to 2 Cor. x. 10. and to chap. xii. 7, 8, 9. But whatever it was, it seems it made no impression on them to his disadvantage. For, (2.) He takes notice, that notwithstanding this his infirmity, which might possibly lessen him in the esteem of some others, yet they did not *despise or reject* him on the account of it, but, on the contrary, *received him as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus*; they shewed a great deal of respect to him; he was a welcome messenger to them, even as though an angel of God, or Jesus Christ himself had preached to them. Yea, so great was their esteem of him, that if it would have been any advantage to him, *they could have plucked out their own eyes, and have given them to him.* Note, How uncertain the respects of people are, how apt they are to change their minds, and how easily they are drawn into a contempt of those for whom they once had the greatest esteem and affection, so that they are ready to pluck out the eyes of those for whom they would before have plucked out their own. We should therefore labour to be accepted of God, for it is a small thing to be judged of man's judgment, 1 Cor. iv. 3.

3. How earnestly he expostulates with them hereupon. *Where is then, says he, the blessedness ye spake of?* As if he had said, time was when you expressed the greatest joy and satisfaction in the glad tidings of the gospel, and were very forward in pouring out your blessings upon me as the publisher of them; whence is it that you are now so much altered, that you have so little relish of them, or respect for me? You once thought yourselves happy in receiving the gospel, have you now any reason to think otherwise? Note, Those that have left their first love, would do well to consider, where is now the blessedness they once spake of, what is become of that pleasure they used to take in communion with God, and in the company of his servants? And the more to impress upon them a just shame of their present conduct, he again asks, *ver. 16. Am I become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?* How is it that I who was heretofore your favourite, am now accounted your enemy? Can you pretend any other reason for it, than that I have told you the truth? endeavoured to acquaint you with, and to confirm you in the truth of the gospel; and if not, how unreasonable must your disaffection be? Note, 1. That it is no uncommon thing for men to account those their enemies who are really their best friends; for so to be sure those are, whether ministers or others, who tell them the truth, and deal freely and faithfully with them in matters relating to their eternal salvation, as the apostle now did with these Christians. 2. That ministers may sometimes create enemies to themselves by the faithful discharge of their duty: for this was the case of Paul, he was accounted their enemy for telling them the truth. 3. That yet ministers must not forbear speaking the truth, for fear of offending others, and drawing their displeasure upon them: And, 4. That they may be easy in their own minds, when they are conscious to themselves, that if others are become their enemies, it is only for telling them the truth.

17. They zealously affect you, but not well; yea, they would exclude you, that you might affect them.
18. But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you.

The apostle is still carrying on the same design as in the foregoing verses, which was to convince the Galatians of their sin and folly in departing from the truth of the gospel; and having just before been expostulating with them about the change of their behaviour towards him who endeavoured to establish them in it, he here gives them the character of those false teachers, who made it their business to draw them away from it; which if they would attend to, they might soon see how little reason they had to hearken to them: whatever apprehensions they might have of

them, he tells them they were designing men, who are aiming to set up themselves, and who, under their specious pretences, were more consulting their own interest than theirs: *They zealously affect you*, says he, they shew a mighty respect for you, and pretend a great deal of affection to you, but not well; they do it not with any good design, they are not sincere and upright in it, for *they would exclude you, that you might affect them*; that which they are chiefly aiming at is, to engage your affections to them; and in order to this, they are doing all they can to draw off your affections from me and from the truth, that so they may engross you to themselves. This he assures them was their design, and therefore they must needs be very unwise in hearkening to them. Note, 1. That there may appear to be a great deal of zeal, where yet there is but little truth and sincerity. Note, 2. That it is the usual way of seducers to insinuate themselves into peoples affections, and by that means to draw them into their opinions. 3. That whatever pretences such may make, they have usually more regard to their own interest, than that of others, and will not stick at ruining the reputation of others, if, by that means, they can raise their own. On this occasion the apostle gives us that excellent rule which we have, *ver. 18. It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing.* What our translation renders *in a good thing*, some choose to render *to a good man*, and so consider the apostle, as pointing to himself; and this sense they think is favoured both by the preceding context, and also by the words immediately following, *and not only when I am present with you*: Which may be as if he had said, Time was when you were zealously affected towards me, you once took me for a good man, and have now no reason to think otherwise of me; sure then it would become you to shew the same regard to me now that I am absent from you, which you did when I was present with you. But if we adhere to our own translation, the apostle here furnishes us with a very good rule to direct and regulate us in the exercise of our zeal; and there are two things which to this purpose he more especially recommends to us. (1.) That it be exercised only upon that which is good; for zeal is then only good, when it is in a good thing: they who are zealously affected to that which is evil, will thereby only do so much the more hurt. And, (2.) That herein it be constant and steady. It is good to be zealous *always* in a good thing, not for a time only, or now and then, like the heat of an ague fit; but like the natural heat of the body, constant. And happy would it be for the church of Christ, if this rule was better observed among Christians.

19. My little children, of whom I travail in birth again, until Christ be formed in you, 20. I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice, for I stand in doubt of you.

That the apostle might the better dispose these Christians to bear with him in the reproofs which he was obliged to give them, he here expresses his great affection to them, and the very tender concern he had for their welfare: he was not like them, one thing when among them, and another when absent from them; their disaffection to him had not removed his affection from them; but he still bore the same respect to them which he had formerly done, nor was he like their false teachers who pretended a great deal of affection to them, when at the same time they were only consulting their own interest; but he had a sincere concern for their truest advantage; he sought not theirs, but them. They were too ready to account him their enemy, but he assures them that he was their friend; nay, not only so, but that he had the bowels of a parent towards them: He calls them *his children*, as he justly might, since he had been the instrument of their conversion to the Christian faith; yea, he styles them his *little children*, which as it denotes a greater degree of tenderness and affection to them, so it may possibly have a respect to their present behaviour; whereby they shewed themselves too like little children, who are easily wrought upon by the arts and insinuations of others: He expresses his concern for them, and earnest desire of their welfare and soul-prosperity by the pangs of a travelling woman, *he travailed in birth for them*: and the great thing that he was in so much pain about, and which he was so earnestly desirous of, was not so much that they might affect him, as that *Christ might be formed in them*; that they might become Christians indeed, and be more confirmed and established in the faith of the gospel. From whence we may note, 1. The very tender affection which faithful ministers bear towards those among whom they are employed, it is like that of the most affectionate parents to their little children. 2. That the chief thing they are longing, and even travelling in birth for on their account, is that Christ may be formed in them; not so much that they may gain their affections, much less that they make a prey of them, but that they may be renewed in the spirit of their minds, wrought into the image of Christ, and more fully settled and confirmed in the Christian faith and life: And how unreasonably must those people act, who suffer themselves to be prevailed upon to desert or dislike such ministers? 3. That Christ is not fully formed in men till they are brought off from trusting in their own righteousness, and made to rely only upon him and his righteousness.

As a farther evidence of the affection and concern which the apostle had for these Christians, he adds, *ver. 20.* That *he desired to be then present with them*, he would be glad of an opportunity of being among them, and conversing with them, and that thereupon he might find occasion *to change his voice* towards them; for at present *he stood in doubt of them*, he knew not well what to think of them, he was not so fully acquainted with their state as to know how to accommodate himself to them; he was full of fears and jealousies concerning them, which was the reason of his writing to them in such a manner as he had done; but he would be glad to find that matters were better with them than he feared, and that he might have occasion to speak them fair, instead of thus reproving and chiding them. Note, That though ministers too often find it necessary to reprove those they have to do with, yet this is no grateful work to them, they had much rather there was no occasion for it, and are always glad when they can see reason to change their voice towards them.

21. Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? 22. For it is written, that Abraham had two sons; the one by a bond-maid, the other by a free-woman. 23. But he *who was* of the bond-woman, was born after the flesh: but he of the free-woman *was* by promise. 24. Which things are an allegory; for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendreth to bondage, which is Agar. 25. For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. 26. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. 27. For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband. 28. Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. 29. But as then he that was born after the flesh, persecuted him *that was born after the Spirit*, even so *it is now*. 30. Nevertheless, what faith the scripture? Cast out the bond-woman and her son: for the son of the bond-woman shall not be heir with the son of the free-woman. 31. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bond-woman, but of the free.

In these verses the apostle illustrates the difference between believers that rested in Christ only, and those Judaizers that trusted in the law, by a comparison taken from the story of Isaac and Ishmael. This he introduces in such a manner as was proper to strike and impress their minds, and to convince them of their great weakness in departing from the truth, and suffering themselves to be deprived of the liberty of the gospel. *Tell me*, says he, *ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?* He takes it for granted that they did hear the law, for among the Jews it was wont to be read in their publick assemblies every sabbath-day; and since they were so very fond of being under it, he would have them duly to consider what is written therein, referring to what is recorded, *Gen. xvi.* and *chap. xxi.* which if they would do, they might soon see how little reason they had for it. And here,

1. He sets before them the history itself, *ver. 22, 23.* For it is written that Abraham had two sons, &c. where he represents the different state and condition of these two sons of Abraham, that the one, *viz.* Ishmael, *was by a bond-maid*, and the other, *viz.* Isaac, *by a free-woman*; and that whereas the former *was born after the flesh*, or by the ordinary course of nature; the other *was by promise*, when in the course of nature there was no reason to expect that Sarah should have a son.

2. He acquaints them with the meaning and design of this history, or the use which he intended to make of it, *ver. 24, 25, 26, 27.* These things, says he, *are an allegory*, wherein, besides the literal and historical sense of the words, the Spirit of God might design to signify something farther to us, and that was, That these two, *viz.* Agar and Sarah, *are the two covenants*, or were intended to typify and prefigure the two different dispensations of the covenant: The former, *viz.* Agar, represented that which was given from mount Sinai, and *which gendreth to bondage*, which though it was a dispensation of grace, yet, in comparison of the gospel state, was a dispensation of *bondage*, and became more so to the Jews through their mistake of the design of it, and expecting to be justified by the works of it. For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, mount Sinai was then called Agar by the Arabians; and it answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children, i. e. It justly represents the present state of the Jews, who continuing in their infidelity, and adhering to that covenant, are still in bondage with their children. But the other, *viz.* Sarah, was intended to prefigure Jerusalem which is above, or the state of Christians under the new and better dispensation of the covenant, which is free both from the curse of the moral, and the bondage of the ceremonial law, and is the mother

of us all, a state into which all, both Jews and Gentiles, are admitted, upon their believing in Christ. And to this greater freedom and enlargement of the church under the gospel dispensation, which was typified by Sarah the mother of the promised seed, the apostle refers that of the prophet, *Isa. liv. 1.* where it is written, *Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not, break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband.*

3. He applies the history, thus explained, to the present case, *ver. 28.* Now we, brethren, says he, *as Isaac was, are the children of the promise*: We Christians, who have accepted Christ, and rely upon him, and look for justification and salvation by him alone, as hereby we become the *spiritual*, though we are not the natural seed of Abraham, so we are intitled to the promised inheritance, and interested in the blessings of it. But lest these Christians should be stumbled at the opposition they might meet with from the Jews, who were so tenacious of their law, as to be ready to persecute those that would not submit to it; he tells them that this was no more than what was pointed to in the type; for as then he that was born after the flesh, persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, they must expect it would be so now. But for their comfort in this case, he desires them to consider what the scripture saith, *viz. Gen. xx. 10.* Cast out the bond-woman and her son, for the son of the bond-woman shall not be heir with the son of the free-woman: Though the Judaizers should persecute and hate them, yet the issue would be that Judaism would sink, and wither, and perish; but true Christianity should flourish and last for ever. And then, as a general inference from the whole, or the sum of what he had said, he concludes, *ver. 31.* So then, brethren, we are not children of the bond-woman, but of the free.

C H A P. V.

In this chapter the apostle comes to make application of his foregoing discourse: He begins it with a general caution, or exhortation, *ver. 1.* which he afterwards enforces by several considerations, from *ver. 2. to the 13th.* He then presses them to serious practical godliness, which would be the best antidote against the snares of their false teachers, particularly, 1. That they should not strive with one another, *ver. 13, 14, 15.* 2. That they would strive against sin: where he shews, (1.) That there is in every one a struggle between flesh and spirit, *ver. 17.* (2.) That it is our duty and interest, in this struggle, to side with the better part, *ver. 16, 18.* (3.) He instances in the works of the flesh, which must be watched against and mortified; and in the fruits of the Spirit, which must be brought forth and cherished; and shews of what importance it is that they be so, *ver. 19—24.* And then concludes the chapter with a caution against pride and envy.

1. **S**TAND fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. 2. Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. 3. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. 4. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace. 5. for we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. 6. For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love. 7. Ye did run well, who did hinder you, that ye should not obey the truth? 8. This perswasion cometh not of him that calleth you. 9. A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. 10. I have confidence in you through the Lord, that you will be none otherwise minded: but he that troubleth you, shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be. 11. And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased. 12. I would they were even cut off which trouble you.

In the former part of this chapter the apostle cautions the Galatians to take heed of the Judaizing teachers, who endeavoured to bring them back under the bondage of the law: He had been arguing against them before, and had largely shewn how contrary the principles and spirit of those teachers were to the spirit of the gospel; and now this is as it were the general inference or application of all that discourse. Since it appeared by what had been said, that we can only be justified by faith in Jesus Christ, and not by the righteousness of the law; and that the law of Moses was no longer in force, nor Christians under any obligation to submit to it; therefore he would have them to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and not to be again entangled with the yoke of bondage. Here observe, 1. That under the gospel we are enfranchised, we are brought into a state of liberty, wherein we are freed from the yoke of the ceremonial law,

law, and from the curse of the moral law; so that we are no longer tied to the observation of the one, nor tied up to the rigour of the other, which curses every one that continues not in all things written therein to do them, *chap. iii. 10.* 2. That we owe this liberty to Jesus Christ, it is he who *has made us free*; by his merits he has satisfied the demands of the broken law, and by his authority as a king, he has discharged us from the obligation of those carnal ordinances, which were imposed on the Jews. And 3. That it is therefore our duty to *stand fast in this liberty*, i. e. constantly and faithfully to adhere to the gospel and to the liberty of it, and that we do not suffer ourselves upon any considerations to *be again intangled with the yoke of bondage*, or persuaded to return back to the law of Moses. This is the general caution or exhortation, which in the following verses the apostle enforces by several reasons or arguments. As,

1. That their submitting to circumcision, and depending on the works of the law for righteousness, was an implicit contradiction of their faith as Christians, and a forfeiture of all their advantages by Jesus Christ, *ver. 2, 3, 4.* And here we may observe, (1.) With what solemnity the apostle asserts and declares this, *Behold, I Paul say unto you*, *ver. 2.* and he repeats it, *ver. 3. I testify unto you*, q. d. I who have proved my self an apostle of Christ, and to have received my authority and instructions from him, do declare, and am ready to pawn my credit and reputation upon it, *That if you be circumcised Christ shall profit you nothing*, &c. Wherein he shews that what he was now saying, was not only a matter of great importance, but what might be most assuredly depended on: He was so far from being a preacher of circumcision, as some might report him to be, that he looked upon it as a matter of the greatest consequence, that they did not submit to it.

(2.) What it is which he so solemnly, and with so much assurance declares, it is that *if they were circumcised Christ would profit them nothing*, &c. We are not to suppose that it is *meer* circumcision which the apostle is here speaking of, or that it was his design to say, that none who are circumcised could have any benefit by Christ; for all the Old Testament saints had been circumcised, and he himself had consented to the circumcising of Timothy. But he is to be understood as speaking of circumcision in the sense in which the Judaizing teachers did impose it, who taught *that except they were circumcised and kept the law of Moses they could not be saved*, Acts xv. 1. And that this is his meaning appears from *ver. 4.* where he expresses the same thing by their being *justified by the law*, or seeking justification by the works of it. Now in this case, if they submitted to circumcision in this sense, he declares that *Christ would profit them nothing*; *that they were debtors to do the whole law*; that *Christ was become of none effect to them*, and that *they were fallen from grace*. From all which expressions it appears, that thereby they renounced that way of justification which God had established; yea, that they laid themselves under an impossibility of being justified in his sight, for they became debtors to do the whole law, which required such an obedience as they were not capable of performing, and denounced a curse against those that failed in it; and therefore condemned, but could not justify them: and consequently that having thus revolted from Christ, and built their hopes upon the law, Christ would profit them nothing, nor be of any effect to them. Thus as by being circumcised they renounced their Christianity, so they cut themselves off from all advantage by Christ; and therefore there was the greatest reason why they should steadfastly adhere to that doctrine which they had embraced, and not suffer themselves to be brought under this yoke of bondage. Note, 1. That though Jesus Christ is able to save to the uttermost, yet there are multitudes to whom he shall profit nothing. 2. That all those who seek to be justified by the law, do thereby render Christ of none effect to them; by building their hopes on the works of the law, they forfeit all their hopes from him; for he will not be the Saviour of any who will not own and rely upon him as their only Saviour.

2. To persuade them to steadfastness in the doctrine and liberty of the gospel, he sets before them his own example, and that of other Jews who had embraced the Christian religion, and acquaints them what their hopes were, *viz. That through the Spirit they were waiting for the hope of righteousness by faith*. Though they were Jews by nature, and had been bred up under the law, yet being, through the Spirit, brought to the knowledge of Christ, they had renounced all dependence on the works of the law, and looked for justification and salvation only by faith in him: And therefore it must needs be the greatest folly in them who had never been under the law, to suffer themselves to be brought into subjection to it, and to found their hopes upon the works of it. Here we may observe, (1.) What it is that Christians are waiting for, it is *the hope of righteousness*, by which we are chiefly to understand the happiness of the other world; this is called the *hope of Christians*, as it is the great object of their hope, which they are above every thing else desiring and pursuing; and the *hope of righteousness*, as their hopes of it are founded on righteousness, not their own, but that of our Lord Jesus: For though a life of righteousness is the way that leads to this happiness, yet it is the righteousness of Christ alone, which has procured it for us,

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and on the account of which we can expect to be brought to the possession of it. (2.) How they hope to obtain this happiness, and that is *by faith*, *viz. in our Lord Jesus Christ*, not by the works of the law, or any thing they can do to deserve it, but only by faith, receiving and relying upon him as *the Lord our righteousness*. It is in this way only that they expect either to be entitled to it here, or possessed of it hereafter. And (3.) Whence it is that they are thus waiting for the hope of righteousness, it is *through the Spirit*; herein they act under the direction and influence of the Holy Spirit: It is under his conduct and by his assistance, that they are both persuaded and enabled to believe on Christ, and to look for the hope of righteousness through him. And when the apostle thus represents the case of Christians, it is implied that if they expected to be justified and saved in any other way, they were like to meet with a disappointment, and therefore that they were greatly concerned to adhere to the doctrine of the gospel which they had embraced.

3. He argues from the nature and design of the Christian institution, which was to abolish the difference between Jew and Gentile, and to establish faith in Christ, as the way of our acceptance with God. He tells them, *ver. 6.* that *in Christ Jesus*, or under the gospel dispensation, *neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision*. Though while the legal state lasted, there was a difference put between Jew and Greek, between those that were and those that were not circumcised, the former being admitted to those privileges of the church of God, from which the other were excluded; yet it was otherwise in the gospel state; Christ who is *the end of the law* being come, now it was neither here nor there whether a man was circumcised or uncircumcised, he was neither the better for the one, nor the worse for the other, nor would either the one or the other recommend him to God; and therefore as their Judaizing teachers were very unreasonable in imposing circumcision upon them, and obliging them to observe the law of Moses, so they must needs be very unwise in submitting to them herein. But though he assures them that neither circumcision nor uncircumcision would avail to their acceptance with God, yet he acquaints them what would do so, and that is *faith which worketh by love*: Such a faith in Christ as discovered itself to be true and genuine by a sincere love to God and our neighbour. If they had this, it mattered not whether they were circumcised or uncircumcised, but without it nothing else would stand them in any stead. Note, 1. That no external privileges or profession will avail to our acceptance with God, without a sincere faith in our Lord Jesus. 2. That faith where it is true, is a working grace, it works by love, love to God, and love to our brethren; and faith thus working by love, is all in all in our Christianity.

4. To recover them from their backslidings, and engage them to greater steadfastness for the future, he puts them in mind of their good beginnings, and calls upon them to consider whence it was that they were so much altered from what they had been, *ver. 7.* (1.) He tells them that *they did run well*; at their first setting out in Christianity they had behaved themselves very commendably, they had readily embraced the Christian religion, and discovered a becoming zeal in the ways and work of it; as in their baptism they were devoted to God, and had declared themselves the disciples of Christ, so their behaviour was agreeable to their character and profession. Note, 1. That the life of a Christian is a race, wherein he must run, and hold on, if he would obtain the prize. 2. That it is not enough that we *run* in this race, by a profession of Christianity, but we must *run well* by living up to that profession. Thus these Christians had done for a while, but they had been obstructed in their progress, and were either turned out of the way, or at least made to flag and falter in it. Therefore (2.) He asks them, and calls upon them to ask themselves, *Who did hinder them?* or how it came to pass that they did not hold on in the way wherein they had begun to run so well. He very well knew who they were, and what it was, that hindered them; but he would have them to put the question to themselves, and seriously consider, whether they had any good reason to hearken to those that gave them this disturbance, and whether what they offered was sufficient to justify them in their present conduct. Note, 1. That many who set out fair in religion, and run well for a while, run within the bounds appointed for the race, and run with zeal and alacrity too, yet by some means or other are hindered in their progress, or turned out of the way. 2. That it concerns those who have run well, but now begin either to turn out of the way, or to tire in it, to enquire what it is that hinders them. Young converts must expect that Satan will be laying stumbling-blocks in their way, and doing all he can to divert them from the course they are in; but whenever they find themselves in danger of being turned out of it, they would do well to consider who it is that hinders them. Whoever they were that hindered these Christians, the apostle tells them, that by hearkening to them, they were kept from *obeying the truth*, and thereby in danger of losing the benefit of what they had done in religion. The gospel which he had preached to them, and which they had embraced and professed, he assures them was the truth; it was therein only that the true way of justification and salvation was fully discovered, and in order to their enjoying the advantage of it, it was necessary that they should

should obey it, that they should firmly adhere to it, and continue to govern their lives and hopes according to the directions of it. If therefore they should suffer themselves to be drawn away from it, they must needs be guilty of the greatest weakness and folly. Note, 1. That the truth is not only to be believed but to be obeyed, not only to be received in the light of it, but in the love and power of it. 2. That they do not rightly obey the truth, who do not stedfastly adhere to it. 3. That there is the same reason for our obeying the truth, which there was for our embracing it; and therefore they act very unreasonably, who when they have begun to run well in the Christian race, suffer themselves to be hindered, so as not to persevere in it.

5. He argues for their stedfastness in the faith and liberty of the gospel, from the ill rise of that persuasion whereby they were drawn away from it, *ver. 8. This persuasion*, says he, *cometh not of him that calleth you.* The opinion or persuasion which the apostle here speaks of was, no doubt, that of the necessity of their being circumcised and keeping the law of Moses, or of their mixing the works of the law with faith in Christ in the business of justification. This was what the Judaizing teachers endeavoured to impose upon them, and what they had too easily fallen into. But to convince them of their folly herein, he tells them, that this persuasion did not come of him that called them, *i. e.* either of God, by whose authority the gospel had been preached to them, and they had been called into the fellowship of it; or of the apostle himself, who had been employed as the instrument of calling them hereunto. It could not come from God, for it was contrary to that way of justification and salvation, which he had established, nor could they have received it from Paul himself; for whatever some might pretend, he had all along been an opposer and not a preacher of circumcision; and if in any instance he had submitted to it for the sake of peace, yet he had never pressed the use of it upon Christians, much less imposed it upon them, as necessary to salvation. Since then this persuasion did not come of him that had called them, he leaves them to judge from whence it must arise, and sufficiently intimates, that it could be owing to none but Satan and his instruments; who by this means were endeavouring to overthrow their faith, and obstruct the progress of the gospel, and therefore how much reason they had to reject it, and to continue stedfast in the truth which they had before embraced. Note, 1. That in order to our judging aright of the different persuasions in religion there are among Christians, it concerns us to enquire, whether they come of him that calleth us, whether or no they are founded upon the authority of Christ and his apostles. 2. That if upon enquiry they appear to have no such foundation, how forward soever others may be to impose them upon us, we should by no means submit to them, but reject them.

6. The danger there was of the spreading of this infection, and the ill influence it might have upon others, is a further argument which the apostle urges against their complying with their false teachers, in what they would impose on them: It is possible that to extenuate their fault, they might be ready to say, that there were but few of those teachers among them who endeavoured to draw them into this persuasion and practice; or that they were only some lesser matters wherein they complied with them, that though they submitted to be circumcised, and to observe some few rites of the Jewish law, yet they had by no means renounced their Christianity, and gone over to Judaism: Or suppose their complying thus far was so faulty as he would represent it, yet perhaps they might further say, there were but few among them that had done so, and therefore he need not be so much concerned about it. Now to obviate such pretences as these, and to convince them that there was more danger in it than they were aware of, he tells them, *ver. 9. that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump*; that the whole lump of Christianity may be tainted and corrupted by one such erroneous principle, or that the whole lump of the Christian society may be infected by one member of it; and therefore that they were greatly concerned not to yield in this single instance; or if any had done so, to endeavour by all proper methods to purge out the infection from among them. Note, That it is dangerous for Christian churches to encourage those among them who entertain, especially who set themselves to propagate destructive errors. This was the case here; the doctrine which the false teachers were industrious to spread, and which some in these churches had been drawn into, was subversive of Christianity itself, as the apostle had before shewn: and therefore though the number, either of the one or the other of these, might be but few, yet considering the fatal tendency of it, and the corruption of human nature, whereby others were too much disposed to be infected with it; he would not have them on that account to be easy and unconcerned, but remember that *a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.* If these were indulged, the contagion might soon spread farther and wider; and if they suffered themselves to be imposed upon in this instance, it might soon issue in the utter ruin of the truth and liberty of the gospel.

7. That he might conciliate the greater regard to what he had said, he expresses the hopes he had concerning them, *ver. 10. I have confidence in you*, says he, *through the Lord, that you will be*

none otherwise minded. Though he had many fears and doubts about them, which was the occasion of his using so much plainness and freedom with them, yet he hoped that through the blessing of God upon what he had written, they might be brought to be of the same mind with him, and to own and abide by that truth and liberty of the gospel which he had preached to them, and was now endeavouring to confirm them in. Wherein he teaches us, that we ought to hope the best even of those concerning whom we have cause to fear the worst: And that they might be the less offended at the reproofs he had given them for their unstedfastness in the faith, he lays the blame of it more upon others than themselves, for he adds, *But he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be.* He was sensible that there were some that troubled them, and would pervert the gospel of Christ, as *chap. i. 7.* and possibly he may point to some one particular man, who was more busy and forward than others, and might be the chief instrument of the disorder that was among them, and to this he imputes their defection or inconstancy more than to any thing in themselves. Which may give us occasion to observe, that in reproofing sin and error, we should always distinguish between the leaders and the led; such as set themselves to draw others thereto, and such as are drawn aside by them. Thus the apostle softens and alleviates the fault of these Christians, even while he is reproofing them, that he might the better persuade them to return to and stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free: But as for him or them that troubled them, whoever he or they were, he declares they *should bear their judgment*, he did not doubt but God would deal with them according to their deserts, and out of his just indignation against them as enemies of Christ and his church, he wishes that *they were even cut off*; not cut off from Christ and all hopes of salvation by him, but cut off by the censures of the church, which ought to witness against those teachers, who thus corrupted the purity of the gospel. Note, That those, whether ministers or others, who set themselves to overthrow the faith of the gospel, and disturb the peace of Christians, do thereby forfeit the privileges of Christian communion, and deserve to be cut off from them.

8. To dissuade these Christians from hearkening to their Judaizing teachers, and to recover them from the ill impressions they had made upon them; he represents them as men who had used very base and disingenuous methods to compass their designs, for they had misrepresented him, that they might the more easily gain their ends upon them: That which they were endeavouring, was to bring them to submit to circumcision, and not to mix Judaism with their Christianity; and the better to accomplish this design, they had given out among them that Paul himself was a preacher of circumcision: For when he says, *ver. 11. And I brethren, if I yet preach circumcision*, it plainly appears, that they had reported him to have done so, and that they had made use of this as an argument to prevail with them to submit to it. It is likely they grounded this report upon his having circumcised Timothy, *Acts xvi. 3.* But though for good reasons he had yielded to circumcision in that instance, yet that he was a preacher of it, and especially in that sense wherein they imposed it, he utterly denies; and to prove the injustice of this charge upon him, he offers such arguments, as, if they would allow themselves to consider, could not fail to convince them of it, *viz. (1.)* That if he would have preached circumcision, he might have avoided persecution: If I yet preach circumcision, says he, *Why do I yet suffer persecution?* It was evident, and they could not but be sensible of it, that he was hated and persecuted by the Jews; but what account could be given of this their behaviour towards him, if he had so far symbolized with them as to preach up circumcision, and the observation of the law of Moses, as necessary to salvation? This was the great point they were contending for; and if he had fallen in with them herein, instead of being exposed to their rage, he might have been received into their favour. When therefore he was suffering persecution from them, this was a plain evidence he had not complied with them: Yea, that he was so far from preaching the doctrine he was charged with, that rather than do so, he was willing to expose himself to the greatest hazards. *(2.)* That if he had yielded to the Jews herein, *then would the offence of the cross have ceased*; they would not have took so much offence against the doctrine of Christianity, as they did, nor should he and others have been exposed to so much suffering on the account of it, as they were. He acquaints us, *1 Cor. i. 23.* that the preaching of the cross of Christ (or the doctrine of justification and salvation only by faith in Christ crucified) *was to the Jews a stumbling-block.* That which they were most offended at in Christianity, was, that thereby circumcision, and the whole frame of the legal administration, was set aside as no longer in force. This raised their greatest outcries against it, and stirred them up to oppose and persecute the professors of it. Now if Paul and others could have given into this opinion that circumcision was still to be retained, and the observation of the law of Moses joined with faith in Christ as necessary to salvation, then their offence against it would have been in a great measure removed, and they might have avoided those sufferings they underwent for the sake of it. But though others, and particularly those who were so forward to asperse him as a preacher of this doctrine, could easily come into it, yet so could not he; he rather chose to hazard his ease and credit,

credit, yea, his very life itself, than thus to corrupt the truth, and give up the liberty of the gospel: And hence it was that the Jews continued to be so much offended against Christianity, and against him as the preacher of it. Thus the apostle clears himself from the unjust reproach which his enemies had cast upon him, and at the same time shews how little regard was due to those men who could treat him in such an injurious manner, and how much reason he had to wish that they were even cut off.

13. For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only *use* not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. 14. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, *even* in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self. 15. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. 16. *This* I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. 17. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. 18. But if ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law. 19. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*, Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, 20. Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, 21. Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things, shall not inherit the kingdom of God. 22. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23. Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. 24. And they that are Christs, have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts. 25. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. 26. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.

In the latter part of this chapter the apostle comes to exhort these Christians to serious practical godliness, as the best antidote against the snares of the false teachers. Two things especially he presses upon them:

1. That they should not strive with one another, but love one another. He tells them, *ver. 13.* That *they had been called unto liberty*; and he would have them to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free; but yet he would have them be very careful that they did not *use this liberty as an occasion to the flesh*, that they did not from thence take occasion to indulge themselves in any corrupt affections and practices, and particularly such as might create distance and disaffection, and be the ground of quarrels and contentions among them: But, on the contrary, he would have them *by love to serve one another*, to maintain that mutual love and affection, which, notwithstanding any lesser differences there might be among them, would dispose them to all those offices of respect and kindness to each other, which the Christian religion obliged them to. Note, 1. That the liberty we enjoy as Christians, is not a *licentious* liberty: though Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, yet he has not freed us from the obligation of it; the gospel is a *doctrine according to godliness*, 1 Tim. vi. 3. and is so far from giving the least countenance to sin, that it lays us under the strongest obligations to avoid and subdue it. 2. That though we ought to stand fast in our *Christian liberty*, yet we should not insist upon it to the breach of *Christian charity*; we should not use it as an occasion of strife and contention with our fellow Christians, who may be differently minded from us; but should always maintain such a temper towards each other as may dispose us by love to serve one another. This the apostle endeavours to persuade these Christians to, and there are two considerations which he sets before them to this purpose: 1. *That all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self*, *ver. 14.* Love is the sum of the whole law; as love to God comprizes the duties of the first table, so love to our neighbour those of the second. The apostle takes notice of the latter here, because he was speaking of their behaviour towards one another; and when he makes use of this as an argument to persuade them to mutual love, he intimates, both that this would be a good evidence of their sincerity in religion, and also the most likely means of rooting out those dissensions and divisions that were among them. It will appear that we are the disciples of Christ indeed, when we have love one to another, *John xiii. 35.* and where this temper is kept up, if it do not wholly extinguish those unhappy discords that are among Christians, yet at least it would so far accommodate them, as that the fatal consequences of them might be prevented. 2. The sad and dangerous tendency of a contrary behaviour, *ver. 15.* But, says he, *if instead of serving one another in love, and therein fulfilling the law of God, ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.* If instead of

acting like men and Christians, they would behave themselves more like brute beasts in tearing and rending one another, they could expect nothing else as the consequence of it, but that they would be consumed one of another; and therefore they had the greatest reason not to indulge themselves in such quarrels and animosities. Note, That mutual strifes among brethren, if persisted in, are like to prove a common ruin; they that devour one another, are in a fair way to be consumed one of another. Christian churches cannot be ruined, but by their own hands; but if Christians that should be helps to one another, and a joy one to another, be as brute beasts, biting and devouring each other, what can be expected but that the God of love should deny his grace to them, and the Spirit of love should depart from them, and that the evil spirit that seeks the destruction of them all should prevail?

2. That they would all strive against sin; and happy would it be for the church, if Christians would let all their quarrels be swallowed up of this, even a quarrel against sin; if instead of biting and devouring one another on the account of their different opinions, they would all set themselves against sin in themselves, and the places where they live. This is what we are chiefly concerned to fight against, and that which above every thing else we should make it our business to oppose and suppress. To excite Christians hereunto, and to assist them herein, the apostle shews,

(1.) That there is in every one a struggle between the flesh and the Spirit, *ver. 17.* *The flesh*, i. e. the corrupt and carnal part of us, *lusteth*, i. e. strives and struggles with strength and vigour *against the Spirit*. It opposes all the motions of the Spirit, and resists every thing that is spiritual. On the other hand, *the Spirit*, i. e. the renewed part of us, strives *against the flesh*, and opposes the will and desire of it: and from hence it comes to pass *that we cannot do the things that we would*; as the principle of grace in us will not suffer us to do all the evil which our corrupt nature would prompt us to, so neither can we do all the good that we would, by reason of the oppositions we meet with from that corrupt and carnal principle: Even as in a natural man there is something of struggle, the convictions of his conscience, and the corruption of his own heart, strive with one another; his convictions would suppress his corruptions, and his corruptions silence his convictions; so in a renewed man, where there is something of a good principle, there is a struggle between the old nature and the new nature, the remainders of sin and the beginnings of grace; and this Christians must expect will be their exercise as long as they continue in this world.

(2.) That it is our duty and interest in this struggle to side with the better part, to side with our convictions against our corruptions, and with our graces against our lusts. This the apostle represents as our duty, and directs us to the most effectual means of success in it. If it should be asked, What course must we take that the better interest may get the better? He give us this one general rule, which, if duly observed, would be the most sovereign remedy against the prevalence of corruption, and that is to walk in the Spirit, *ver. 16.* *This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.* By the Spirit here may be meant either the holy Spirit himself, who condescends to dwell in the hearts of those whom he has renewed and sanctified, to guide and assist them in the way of their duty, or that gracious principle which he implants in the souls of his people, and which lusts against the flesh, or that corrupt principle which still remains in them, as that does against it. Accordingly the duty here recommended to us is, That we set ourselves to act under the conduct and influence of the blessed Spirit, and agreeably to the motions and tendency of the new nature in us; and if this be our care in the ordinary course and tenor of our lives, we may depend upon it, that though we may not be freed from the stirrings and oppositions of our corrupt nature, yet we shall be kept from *fulfilling it in the lusts thereof*; so that though it remain in us, yet it shall not obtain a dominion over us. Note, That the best antidote against the poison of sin, is to walk in the Spirit; to be much in conversing with spiritual things, to mind the things of the soul, which is the spiritual part of man, more than those of the body, which is his carnal part; to commit our selves to the guidance of the word, wherein the holy Spirit makes known the will of God concerning us, and in the way of our duty to act in a dependence on his aids and influences: And as this would be the best means of preserving them from fulfilling the lusts of the flesh, so it would be a good evidence that they were Christians indeed; for, says the apostle, *ver. 18.* *If ye be led by the Spirit ye are under the law*, q. d. You must expect a struggle between flesh and Spirit, as long as you are in the world; that the flesh will be lusting against the Spirit, as well as the Spirit against the flesh: but if in the prevailing bent and tenour of your lives you are *led by the Spirit*; if you act under the guidance and government of the holy Spirit, and of that spiritual nature and disposition he has wrought in you; if you make the word of God your rule, and the grace of God your principle; it will from hence appear, that you are *not under the law*; not under the condemning, though you are still under the commanding, power of it: for *there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after*

after the Spirit; and as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God, Rom. viii. 1—14.

(3.) The apostle instances in the works of the flesh, which must be watched against and mortified, and in the fruits of the Spirit, which must be cherished and brought forth, ver. 19, &c. and by instancing in particulars, he further illustrates what he is here upon. He begins,

(1.) With *the works of the flesh*, which as they are many, so they are manifest: It is past dispute, that the things he here speaks of are the works of the flesh, or the product of corrupt and depraved nature; most of them are condemned by the light of nature itself, and all of them by the light of scripture. The particulars he instances in are of various sorts; some are sins against the seventh commandment, such as *adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness*; by which are meant not only the gross acts of these sins, but all such thoughts, or words, or actions, as have a tendency towards the great transgression. Some are sins against the first and second commandments, as *idolary and witchcraft*; others are sins against our neighbour, and contrary to the royal law of brotherly love, such as *hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife*, which too often occasion *seditions, heresies, envyings*, and sometimes break out into *murders*, not only of the names and reputation, but even of the very lives of our fellow-creatures. Others are sins against our selves, such as *drunkenness and revellings*; and he concludes the catalogue with an *et cætera*, and gives fair warning to all to take care of them, as they hope to see the face of God with comfort. Of these and *such like*, says he, *I tell you before, as I have also told you in times past*, that *they which do such things*, how much sooner they may flatter themselves with vain hopes, *shall not inherit the kingdom of God*. These are sins which will undoubtedly shut men out of heaven. The world of spirits can never be comfortable to those that plunge themselves in the filth of the flesh; nor will the righteous and holy God ever admit such into his favour and presence, unless they are first *washed, and sanctified, and justified in the name of our Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God*, 1 Cor. vi. 11.

(2.) He instances in the fruits of the Spirit, or the renewed nature, which as Christians we are concerned to bring forth, ver. 22, 23. And here we may observe, That as sin is called the work of the flesh, because the flesh, or corrupt nature, is the principle that moves and excites men to it; so grace is said to be the fruit of the Spirit, because it wholly proceeds from the Spirit, as the fruit does from the root: And whereas before the apostle had chiefly instanced in those works of the flesh, which were not only hurtful to men themselves, but tended to make them so to one another; so here he chiefly takes notice of those fruits of the Spirit, which had a tendency to make Christians agreeable one to another, as well as easy to themselves: and this was very suitable to the caution or exhortation he had before given, ver. 13. That they would *not use their liberty as an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another*; particularly he recommends to us *love*, viz. to God especially, and to one another for his sake. *Joy*, by which may be understood cheerfulness in conversation with our friends, or rather a constant delight in God. *Peace*, viz. with God and conscience, or a peaceableness of temper and behaviour towards others. *Longsuffering*, i. e. Patience to defer anger, and a contentedness to bear injuries. *Gentleness*, i. e. such a sweetness of temper, and especially towards our inferiors, as disposes us to be affable and courteous, and easy to be intreated when any have wronged us. *Goodness*, i. e. Kindness and beneficence, which shews itself in a readiness to do good to all, as we have opportunity. *Faith*, i. e. Fidelity, justice, and honesty, in what we profess and promise to others. *Meekness*, wherewith to govern our passions and resentments, so as not to be easily provoked, and when we are so, to be soon pacified: And *temperance*, viz. in meat and drink, and other enjoyments of life, so as not to be excessive and immoderate in the use of them. And concerning these things, or those in whom these fruits of the Spirit are found, the apostle says, *there is no law against them*, i. e. to condemn and punish them: Yea, from hence it appears, that they are not under the law, but under grace; for these fruits of the Spirit, in whomsoever they are found, do plainly shew, that such are *led by the Spirit*, and consequently that they are not *under the law*, as ver. 18.

And as by instancing in these works of the flesh and fruits of the Spirit, the apostle directs us both what we are to avoid and oppose, and what we are to cherish and cultivate; so, ver. 24. he acquaints us, That this is the sincere care and endeavour of all real Christians: *And they that are Christ's*, says he, i. e. they who are Christians indeed, not only in shew and profession, but in sincerity and truth, *have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts*. As in their baptism they were obliged hereunto, for being baptized into Christ, they were baptized into his death, Rom. vi. 3. so they are now sincerely employing themselves herein, and in conformity to their Lord and head, are endeavouring to die unto sin, as he has died for it. They have not yet obtained a complete victory over it, they have still flesh as well as Spirit in them, and that has its affections and lusts, which continue to give them no little disturbance; but as it does not now reign in their mortal bodies, so as that they obey it in the lusts thereof, Rom. vi. 12. so they are seeking the utter ruin and destruction

of it, and to put it to the same shameful and ignominious though lingering death, which our Lord Jesus underwent for our sakes. Note, That if we would approve ourselves to be Christ's, such as are united to him, and interested in him, we must make it our constant care and business to crucify the flesh with its corrupt affections and lusts: Christ will never own those as his, who yield themselves the servants of sin. But though the apostle here only mentions crucifying of the flesh with the affection and lusts, as the care and character of real Christians; yet no doubt it is also implied, that, on the other hand, we should shew forth those fruits of the Spirit which he had just before been instancing in; this is no less our duty than that, nor is it less necessary to evidence our sincerity in religion: It is not enough that we cease to do evil, but we must learn to do well: Our Christianity obliges us not only to die unto sin, but to live unto righteousness; not only to oppose the works of the flesh, but to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit too. If therefore we would make it appear that we do indeed belong to Christ, this must be our sincere care and endeavour as well as the other: And that it was the design of the apostle to represent both the one and the other of these as our duty, and as necessary to support our character as Christians, may be gathered from what follows, ver. 25. where he adds, *If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit*, i. e. If we profess to have received the Spirit of Christ, or that we are renewed in the spirit of our minds, and indued with a principle of spiritual life; let us make it appear by the proper fruits of the Spirit in our lives. He had before told us, that the Spirit of Christ is a privilege bestowed on all the children of God, chap. iv. 6. Now, says he, if we profess to be of this number, and as such to have obtained this privilege; let us shew it by a temper and behaviour agreeable hereunto; let us evidence our good principles, by good practices. Our conversation will always be answerable to the principle which we are under the conduct and government of: as *they that are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh*, so *they that are after the Spirit do mind the things of the Spirit*, Rom. viii. 5. If therefore we would have it appear that we are Christ's, and that we are partakers of his Spirit, it must be by our *walking not after the flesh, but after the Spirit*. We must set our selves in good earnest both to *mortify the deeds of the body*, and to *walk in newness of life*.

The apostle concludes this chapter with a caution against pride and envy, ver. 26. He had before been exhorting these Christians *by love to serve one another*, ver. 13. and had put them in mind of what would be the consequence, if instead of that they did *bite and devour one another*, ver. 15. Now as a means of engaging them to the one, and preserving them from the other of these, he here cautions them against *being desirous of vain-glory*, or giving way to an undue affectation of the esteem and applause of men, because this, if it were indulged, would certainly lead them to *provoked one another, and to envy one another*. As far as this temper prevails among Christians, they will be ready to slight and despise those whom they look upon as inferior to them, and to be put out of humour if they are denied that respect which they think is their due from them; and they will also be apt to envy those by whom their reputation is in any danger of being lessened: and thus a foundation is laid for those quarrels and contentions, which as they are inconsistent with that love which Christians ought to maintain towards each other, so are greatly prejudicial to the honour and interest of religion itself. This therefore the apostle would have us by all means to watch against. Note, 1. That the glory which comes from men is vain-glory, which instead of being desirous of, we should be dead to. Note, 2. That an undue regard to the approbation and applause of men, is one great ground of the unhappy strifes and contentions that are among Christians.

C H A P. VI.

This chapter chiefly consists of two parts: In the former the apostle gives us several plain and practical directions, which more especially tend to instruct Christians in their duty to one another, and to promote the communion of saints in love, from ver. 1, to ver. 10. In the latter he revives the main design of the epistle, which was to fortify the Galatians against the arts of their Judaizing teachers, and confirm them in the truth and liberty of the gospel: To which purpose he, 1. Gives them the true character of these teachers, and shews them from what motives, and with what views they acted, from ver. 10, to ver. 14. And, 2. On the other hand he acquaints them with his own temper and behaviour; from both which they might easily see how little reason they had to slight him, and to fall in with them. And then he concludes the epistle with a solemn benediction.

1. **B**RETHREN, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. 2. Bear ye one anothers burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. 3. For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.

himself. 4. But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. 5. For every man shall bear his own burden. 6. Let him that is taught in the word, communicate unto him that teacheth, in all good things. 7. Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. 8. For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption: but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. 9. And let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. 10. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

The apostle having, in the forgoing chapter, exhorted Christians, *by love to serve one another*, ver. 13. and also cautioned us, ver. 26. against a temper, which, if indulged, would hinder us from shewing that mutual love and serviceableness which he had recommended; in the beginning of this chapter he proceeds to give us some farther directions, which, if duly observed, would both promote the one, and prevent the other of these, and render our behaviour both more agreeable to our Christian profession, and more useful and comfortable to one another: particularly,

1. We here are taught to deal tenderly with those that are overtaken in a fault, ver. 1. He puts a common case, *if a man be overtaken in a fault*, i. e. be brought to sin by the surprize of temptation. It is one thing to *overtake* a fault by contrivance and deliberation, and full resolution, in sin; and another thing to *be overtaken* in a fault. The latter is the case here supposed, and herein the apostle shews that great tenderness should be used: *They which are spiritual*, by whom is meant, not only the ministers, as if none but they were to be called spiritual persons; but other Christians too, especially those of the higher form in Christianity; these must *restore such a one with the Spirit of meekness*. Here observe, 1. The duty we are directed to, which is to *restore* such; we should labour by faithful reproofs, and pertinent and seasonable counsels, to bring them to repentance: The original word *καταρτίετε*, signifies to set in joint, as a dislocated bone is; accordingly we should endeavour to set them in joint again, to bring them to themselves, by convincing them of their sin and error, persuading them to return to their duty, and comforting them in a sense of pardoning mercy thereupon; and having thus recovered them, to confirm our love to them. 2. The manner wherein this is to be done, viz. *with the spirit of meekness*; not in wrath and passion, as those that triumph in a brother's falls, but with meekness, as those that rather mourn for them. Many needful reproofs lose their efficacy by being given in wrath: but when they are managed with calmness and tenderness, and appear to proceed from a sincere affection to them, and concern for their welfare, they are like to make a due impression. 3. A very good reason why this should be done with meekness; *considering thy self, lest thou also be tempted*. We ought to deal very tenderly with those that are overtaken in sin, because we none of us know but it may some time or other be our own case. We also may be tempted, yea, and overcome by the temptation; and therefore if we rightly consider ourselves, this will dispose us to do by others as we desire to be done by in such a case.

2. We are here directed to *bear one another's burdens*, ver. 2. This may be considered either as referring to what goes before, and so may teach us to exercise forbearance and compassion towards one another, in the case of those weaknesses, and follies, and infirmities, which too often attend us; that though we should not wholly connive at them, yet we should not be severe against one another on the account of them; or as a more general precept, and so it directs us to sympathize with one another, under the various trials and troubles that we may meet with, and to be ready to afford each other that comfort and counsel, that help and assistance, which our circumstances may require. And to excite us hereunto, the apostle adds, by way of motive, that so we shall *fulfil the law of Christ*. This is to act agreeably to the law of his precept, which is the law of love, and obliges us to a mutual forbearance and forgiveness, to sympathy with, and compassion towards, each other; and it would also be agreeable to his pattern and example, which has the force of a law to us. He bears with us under our weaknesses and follies; he is *touched with a fellow-feeling of our infirmities*; and therefore good reason we should maintain the same temper towards one another. Note, Though as Christians we are freed from the law of Moses, yet we are under the law of Christ; and therefore instead of laying unnecessary burdens upon others, as those that urged the observation of Moses's law did, it much more becomes us to fulfil the law of Christ, by bearing one another's burdens.

The apostle being aware how great a hindrance *pride* would be to that mutual condescension and sympathy which he had been recommending, and that a conceit of ourselves would dispose us to censure and condemn our brethren instead of bearing with their infirmities, and endeavouring to restore them when overtaken

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with a fault; he therefore, ver. 3. takes care to caution us against this: he supposes it as a very possible thing (and it would be well if it were not too common) for *a man to think himself to be something*, to entertain a fond opinion of his own sufficiency, to look upon himself as wiser and better than other men, and as fit to dictate and prescribe to them, when in truth *he is nothing*, has nothing of substance or solidity in him, or that can be a ground of that confidence and superiority which he assumes. And to dissuade us from giving way to this temper, he tells us that such a one does but *deceive himself*; while he imposes upon others, by pretending to what he has not; he puts the greatest cheat upon himself, and, sooner or later, will find the sad effects of it. This will never gain him that esteem either with God or good men, which he is ready to expect; he is neither the freer from mistakes, nor will he be the more secure against temptations, for the good opinion he has of his own sufficiency, but rather the more liable to fall into them, and to be overcome by them: for *he that thinks he stands, had need to take heed lest he fall*. Instead therefore of indulging such a vain-glorious humour, which is both destructive of that love and kindness we owe to our fellow-Christians, and also injurious to ourselves; it would much better become us to accept the apostle's exhortation, *Phil. ii. 3. to do nothing through strife, or vain-glory: but that in lowliness of mind we should each esteem other better than ourselves*. Note, That self-conceit is but self-deceit: as it is inconsistent with that charity we owe to others. For *charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up*, 1 Cor. xiii. 4. so it is a cheat upon ourselves, and there is not a more dangerous cheat in the world than self-deceit is. As a means of preventing this evil,

3. We are advised, *Every one to prove his own work*, ver. 4. By *our own work* is chiefly meant our own actions or behaviour. These the apostle directs us to *prove*, i. e. seriously and impartially to examine them by the rule of God's word, to see whether or no they are agreeable to it, and therefore such as God and conscience do approve of: And this he represents as the duty of *every man*; instead of being forward to judge and censure others, it would much more become us to search and try our own ways; our business lies more at home than abroad, with ourselves than with other men; for, *what have we to do to judge another man's servant?* And from the connexion of this exhortation with what goes before, it appears, that if Christians did duly employ themselves in this work, they might easily discover those defects and failings in themselves, which would soon convince them how little reason they have either to be conceited of themselves, or severe in their censures of others. And so it gives us occasion to observe, that the best way to keep us from being proud of ourselves, is to prove our own selves; the better we are acquainted with our own hearts and ways, the less liable shall we be to despise, and the more disposed to compassionate and help others under their infirmities and afflictions.

And that we might be persuaded to this necessary and profitable duty of proving our own work, the apostle urges two considerations very proper for this purpose. (1.) That this is the way to *have rejoicing in ourselves alone*. If we set ourselves in good earnest to *prove our own work*, and upon the trial can *approve* ourselves to God, as to our sincerity and uprightness towards him, then may we expect to have comfort and peace in our own souls, having the testimony of our own consciences for us, as 2 Cor. i. 12. And this he intimates would be a much better ground of joy and satisfaction, than to be able to rejoice *in another*, either in the good opinion which others may have of us, or in having gained over others to our opinion, which the false teachers were wont to glory in, as we see, ver. 13. or by comparing ourselves with others, as, it should seem, some did, who were ready to think well of themselves, because they were not so bad as some others. Too many are apt to value themselves upon such accounts as these; but the joy that results from thence is nothing to that which arises from an impartial trial of ourselves by the rule of God's word, and our being able thereupon to approve ourselves to him. Note, 1. That though we have nothing in ourselves to *boast* of, yet we may have matter of *rejoicing* in ourselves: Our works can merit nothing at the hand of God; but if our consciences can witness for us, that they are such as he for Christ's sake approves and accepts, we may, upon good ground rejoice therein. 2. That the true way to have *rejoicing in ourselves*, is to be much in *proving our own works*; in examining ourselves by the unerring rule of God's word, and not by the false measure of what others are, or may think of us. 3. That it is much more desirable to have matter of glorying in *ourselves* than *in another*. If we have the testimony of our consciences that we are accepted of God, we need not much concern ourselves about what others think or say of us; and without this, the good opinion of others will stand us in little stead. (2.) The other argument which the apostle uses to press upon us this duty of proving our own work, is, *That every man shall bear his own burden*, ver. 5. the meaning of which is, that at the great day, every one shall be reckoned with according as his behaviour here has been. He supposes that there is a day coming, when we must all *give an account of ourselves to God*; and he declares, that then the judgment will proceed, and the sentence pass, not according to the sentiments of the world concerning us, or any ungrounded opinion we may have had of ourselves, or upon our having been better or worse than others; but according as our state and be-

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haviour has really been in the sight of God. And if there be such an awful time to be expected, when he will *render to every one according to his works*, sure there is the greatest reason why we should *prove our own works* now; if we must certainly be called to an account hereafter, sure we ought to be often calling ourselves to an account here, to see whether or no we are such as God will own and approve then; and as this is our duty, so if it were more our practice, we should entertain more becoming thoughts both of ourselves and our fellow-Christians; and instead of bearing hard upon one another, on the account of any mistakes or failings we may be guilty of, we should be more ready to fulfil that *law of Christ*, by which we must be judged in bearing one another's burdens.

4. Christians are here exhorted to be free and liberal in maintaining their ministers, *ver. 6. Let him that is taught in the word, communicate to him that teacheth in all good things.* Where we may observe, (1.) That the apostle speaks of it as a thing known and acknowledged, That as there are some to be *taught*, so there are others who are appointed to *teach* them. The office of the ministry is a divine institution, which does not lie open in common to all, but is confined to those only whom God has qualified for it, and called to it: even reason itself directs us to put a difference between the teachers and the taught; for if all were teachers, there would be none to be taught, and the scriptures sufficiently declare, that it is the will of God we should do so. (2.) That it is the *word of God* wherein ministers are to teach and instruct others; that which they are to preach is *the word*, 2 Tim. iv. 2. That which they are to declare is *the counsel of God*, Acts xx. 27. They are not *lords of our faith*, but *helpers of our joy*, 2 Cor. i. 24. It is the word of God which is the only rule of faith and life; this they are concerned to study, and to open, and improve for the edification of others, but are no further to be regarded, than as they speak according to this rule. (3.) That it is the duty of those who are taught in the word, to support those who are appointed to teach them; for they are *to communicate to them in all good things*, i. e. freely and cheerfully to contribute of the good things which God has blessed them with, what is needful for their comfortable subsistence. Ministers are to *give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine*, 1 Tim. iv. 13. they are not to *intangle themselves with the affairs of this life*, 2 Tim. ii. 4. And therefore it is but fit and equitable, that while they are *sowing to others spiritual things, they should reap their carnal things.* And this is the appointment of God himself: for as under the law, *they who ministered about holy things, lived of the things of the temple; so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel*, 1 Cor. ix. 11, 13, 14.

5. Here is a caution to take heed of mocking God, or of deceiving ourselves, by imagining that he can be imposed upon by mere pretensions or professions, *ver. 7. Be not deceived, God is not mocked.* This may be considered as referring to the foregoing exhortation, and so the design of it is to convince those of their sin and folly, who endeavoured, by any plausible pretences, to excuse themselves from doing their duty in supporting their ministers: or, it may be taken in a more general view, as respecting the whole business of religion, and so as designed to take men off from entertaining any vain hopes of enjoying the rewards of it, while they live in the neglect of the duties of it. The apostle here supposes that many are apt to excuse themselves from the work of religion, and especially the more self-denying and chargeable parts of it, though at the same time they may make a shew and profession of it; but he assures them that *this their way is their folly*, for though hereby they may possibly impose upon others, yet they do but deceive themselves if they think to impose upon God, who is perfectly acquainted with their hearts as well as actions, and as he cannot be deceived, so will not be mocked; and therefore to prevent this, he directs us to lay it down as a rule to ourselves, *That whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap*, or that, according as we behave ourselves now, so will our account be in the great day: Our present time is seed-time, in the other world there will be a great harvest; and as the husbandman reaps in the harvest, according as he sows in the seedness, so we shall reap then as we sow now. And he further acquaints us, *ver. 8. that as there are two sorts of seedness, viz. sowing to the flesh, and sowing to the Spirit; so accordingly will the reckoning be hereafter, If we sow to the flesh, we shall of the flesh reap corruption: If we sow the wind, we shall reap the whirlwind.* They that live a carnal sensual life, who instead of employing themselves to the honour of God, and the good of others, spend all their thoughts, and care, and time, about the flesh, must expect no other fruit of such a course but *corruption*; a mean and short-lived satisfaction at present, and ruin and misery at the end of it. But, on the other hand, *they that sow to the Spirit*, who, under the conduct and influence of the Spirit, do live a holy and spiritual life, a life of devotedness to God, and of usefulness and serviceableness to others, may depend upon it, *that of the Spirit they shall reap life everlasting*; they shall have the truest comfort in their present course, and an eternal life and happiness at the end of it. Note, That they who go about to mock God, do but deceive themselves; hypocrisy in religion is the greatest folly as well as wickedness, since the God we have to do with can easily see through all our disguises, and will certainly deal with us hereafter, not according to our professions, but our practices.

6. Here is a further caution given us, *not to be weary in well-doing*, *ver. 9.* As we should not *excuse* ourselves from any part of our duty, so neither should we *grow weary* in it. There is in all of us too great a proneness hereunto; we are very apt to flag and tire in duty; yea to fall off from it, particularly that part of it, which the apostle here has a special regard to, *viz. that of doing good to others.* This therefore he would have us carefully to watch and guard against; and he gives this very good reason for it, *because in due season we shall reap if we faint not.* Where he assures us, That there is a recompence of reward in reserve for all that sincerely employ themselves in well-doing, that this reward will certainly be bestowed on us in the proper *season*, if not in this world, yet to be sure in the next; but then that it is upon supposition that we *faint not* in the way of our duty. If we grow weary of it, and withdraw from it, we shall not only miss of this reward, but lose the comfort and advantage of what we have already done; but if we hold on and hold out in well-doing, though our reward may be delayed, yet it will surely come, and will be so great as to make us an abundant recompence for all our pains and constancy. Note, That perseverance in well-doing is our wisdom and interest as well as duty, for to this only is the reward promised.

7. Here is an exhortation to all Christians to *do good* in their places, *ver. 10. As we have therefore opportunity, &c.* It is not enough that we *be good* our selves, but we must *do good* to others, if we would approve our selves to be Christians indeed. The duty here recommended to us, is the same that is spoken of in the foregoing verses; and as there the apostle exhorts us to *sincerity* and *perseverance* in it, so here he directs us both as to the *objects* and the *rule* of it. (1.) The objects of this duty are more generally *all men*; we are not to confine our charity and beneficence within too narrow bounds, as the Jews and Judaizing Christians were apt to do; but should be ready to extend it to all that partake of the same common nature with us, as far as we are capable, and they stand in need of us. But yet in the exercise of it, we are to have a special regard to the *household of faith*, or to those who profess the same common faith, and are members of the same body of Christ with us: though others are not to be excluded, yet these are to be preferred. The charity of Christians should be extensive charity; but yet therein a particular respect is to be had to good people. God doth good to all, but in an especial manner he is good to his own servants; and we must in doing good be *followers of God as dear children.* (2.) The rule which we are to observe in doing good to others, is, *as we have opportunity*; which implies, 1. That we should be sure to do it *while we have opportunity*, or while our life lasts, which is the only season wherein we are capable of doing good to them. If therefore we would behave ourselves aright in this matter, we must not, as too many do, neglect it in our life-time, and defer it till we come to die, under a pretence of doing something of this nature then: for as we cannot be sure that we shall then have an opportunity for it; so neither if we should, have we any ground to expect that what we do will be so acceptable to God, much less that we can atone for our past neglects, by leaving something behind us for the good of others, when we could no longer keep it ourselves. But we should take care to do good in our life-time, yea, to make this the business of our lives. And, 2. That we be ready to improve *every opportunity* for it: we should not content ourselves in having done some good already; but whenever fresh occasions offer themselves, as far as our capacity reaches, we should be ready to embrace them too, for we are directed to *give a portion to seven, and also to eight*, Eccles. xi. 2. Note, 1. That as God has made it our duty to do good to others, so he takes care in his providence to furnish us with opportunities for it: *The poor we have always with us*, Matth. xxvi. 11. 2. That whenever God gives us an opportunity of being useful to others, he expects we should improve it, according to our capacity and ability. 3. That we have need of godly wisdom and discretion to direct us in the exercise of our charity and beneficence, and particularly in the choice of the proper objects of it; for though none who stand in need of us are to be wholly overlooked, yet there is a difference to be made between some and others.

11. Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand. 12. As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. 13. For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh. 14. But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. 15. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. 16. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God. 17. From henceforth let no man trouble me; for I bear in my body the

the marks of the Lord Jesus. 18. Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with your spirit. Amen.

The apostle having at large established the doctrine of the gospel, and endeavoured to persuade these Christians to a behaviour agreeable to it, seems as if he intended here to have put an end to the epistle, especially when he had acquainted them, that, as a particular mark of his respect to them, he had written this large letter *with his own hand*, and had not made use of another as his amanuensis, and only subscribed his name to it, as he was wont to do in his other epistles: But such was his affection to them, and concern to recover them from the ill impressions made upon them by their false teachers, that he cannot break off till he has once again given them the true character of those teachers, and an account of his own contrary temper and behaviour; that by comparing these together, they might the more easily see how little reason they had to depart from the doctrine he had taught them, and to comply with theirs.

1. He gives them the true character of those teachers that were industrious to seduce them, in several particulars. As, (1.) That they were men who *desired to make a fair shew in the flesh*, ver. 12. They were very zealous for the externals of religion, forward to observe, and to oblige others to observe, the rites of the ceremonial law; though at the same time they had little or no regard to real piety; for, as the apostle says of them in the following verse, *neither did they themselves keep the law*. Proud, and vain, and carnal hearts, desire nothing more than to make a fair shew in the flesh: and they can easily be content with so much religion as will help them to keep up such a fair shew; but many times those have least of the substance of religion who are most solicitous to make a shew of it. (2.) They were men that were afraid of suffering, for *they constrained the Gentile Christians to be circumcised, only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ*. It was not so much out of a regard to the law, as to themselves; they were willing to sleep in a whole skin, and to save their worldly cargo, cared not though they made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience: That which they chiefly aimed at, was to please the Jews, and to keep up their reputation among them, and so to prevent the trouble that Paul, and other faithful professors of the doctrine of Christ lay open to. And, (3.) Another part of their character was, That they were men of a *party spirit*, and who had no further zeal for the law, than as it subserved their carnal and selfish designs; for they *desired to have these Christians circumcised, that they might glory in their flesh*, ver. 13. that they might say, they had gained them over to their side, and made proselytes of them, of which they carried the mark in their flesh. And thus while they pretended to promote religion, they were the greatest enemies of it, for nothing has been more destructive to the interest of religion than mens siding and party-making.

2. He acquaints us, on the other hand, with his own temper and behaviour, or makes profession of his own faith, and hope, and joy; particularly,

(1.) That his principal glory was in the cross of Christ: *God forbid*, says he, *that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ*, ver. 14. By the cross of Christ, is here meant, his sufferings and death on the cross, or the doctrine of salvation by a crucified Redeemer. This was what the Jews stumbled at, and the Greeks accounted foolishness; and the Judaizing teachers themselves, though they had embraced Christianity, yet were so far ashamed of it, that, in compliance with the Jews, and to avoid persecution from them, they were for mixing the observation of the law of Moses with faith in Christ, as necessary to salvation: but Paul had a very different opinion of it; he was so far from being offended at the cross of Christ, or ashamed of it, or afraid to own it, that he *glories* in it; yea, he desires to glory in nothing else, but rejects the thought of setting up any thing in competition with it, as the object of his esteem, with the utmost abhorrence. *God forbid*, &c. This was the ground of all his hope as a Christian: This was the doctrine, which, as an apostle, he was resolved to preach; and whatever trials his firm adherence to it might bring upon him, he was ready, for his sake, not only to submit to them, but to rejoice in them. Note, That the cross of Christ is a good Christian's chiefest glory, and there is the greatest reason why we should glory in it, for to it we owe all our joys and hopes.

(2.) That he was dead to the world. By Christ, or by the cross of Christ, *the world was crucified to him, and he to the world*; he had experienced the power and virtue of it in weaning him from the world, and this was one great reason of his glorying in it. The false teachers were men of a worldly temper, their chief concern was about their secular interests, and therefore they accommodated their religion thereunto. But Paul was a man of another spirit; as the world had no kindness for him, so neither had he any great regard to it; he was got above both the smiles and the frowns of it; and was become as indifferent to it, as one that is a dying out of it. This is a temper of mind that all Christians should be labouring after; and the best way to attain it, is to converse much with the cross of Christ: the higher esteem we have of him, the meaner opinion shall we have of the world; and the more we contemplate the sufferings our dear Redeemer met

with from the world, the less likely shall we be to be in love with it.

(3.) That he did not lay the stress of his religion on one side or other of the contesting interests, but on sound Christianity, ver. 15. There was at that time an unhappy division among Christians, and circumcision and uncircumcision were become names by which they were distinguished from each other; for, chap. ii. 9, 12. the Jewish Christians are called *the circumcision*, and *they of the circumcision*. The false teachers were very zealous for circumcision; yea, to that degree as to represent it as necessary to salvation, and therefore they did all they could to constrain the Gentile Christians to submit to it: wherein they connived at the use of it among the Jewish converts, yet they were by no means for imposing it upon the Gentiles: But what *they* laid so great a stress upon, Paul made very little account of. It was, indeed, of great importance to the interest of Christianity, that circumcision should not be imposed on the Gentile converts, and therefore *this* he had set himself with the utmost vigour to oppose; but as for mere circumcision or uncircumcision, whether those who had embraced the Christian religion had been Jews or Gentiles; and whether they were for or against continuing the use of circumcision, so that they did not place their religion in it; this was comparatively a matter of little moment with him; for he very well knew, that *in Jesus Christ*, i. e. in his account, or under the Christian dispensation, *neither circumcision availed any thing, nor uncircumcision*, viz. as to mens acceptance with God; *but a new creature*. Where he acquaints us, both wherein real religion does not, and wherein it doth consist; it does not consist in *circumcision* or *uncircumcision*, in our being in this or the other denomination of Christians; but it consists in our being *new creatures*, not in having a new name, or putting on a new face, but in our being renewed in the spirit of our minds, and having Christ formed in us: This is of greatest account with God, and so it was with the apostle. If we compare this text with some others, we may more fully see what it is that renders us most acceptable to God, and which therefore we should be chiefly concerned about: Here we are told, that it is *a new creature*; and, chap. v. 6. that it is *faith which worketh by love*, and 1 Cor. vii. 19. that it is *the keeping the commandments of God*: from all which it appears, that it is such a change of mind and heart, whereby we are disposed and enabled to believe in the Lord Jesus, and to live a life of devotedness to God; and that where this inward vital practical religion is wanting, no outward professions, or particular names, will ever stand us in any stead, or be sufficient to recommend us to him. And were Christians duly concerned to experience this in themselves, and to promote it in others; if it did not make them lay aside their distinguishing names, yet it would at least take them off from laying so great a stress upon them, as they too often do. Note, That Christians should take care to lay the stress of their religion where God has laid it, viz. on those things which are available to our acceptance with him; so we see the apostle did, and it is our wisdom and interest herein to follow his example.

The apostle having shewn what was of chief consideration in religion, and what he laid the greatest stress upon, viz. not a mere empty name or profession, but a sound and saving change; in ver. 16. he pronounces a blessing upon all those that walk according to this rule: *And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be upon them, and mercy upon the Israel of God*. The rule which he here speaks of, may be considered as signifying either more generally the whole word of God, which is the complete and perfect rule of faith and life; or that doctrine of the gospel, or way of justification and salvation which he had laid down in this epistle, viz. by faith in Christ without the works of the law; or, as more immediately referring to the new creature, which he had just before been speaking of: The blessings which he desires for those that walk according to this rule, or which he gives them the hope and prospect of, (for the words may be taken either as a prayer or a promise) are *peace and mercy*. Peace, i. e. with God and conscience, and all the comforts of this life, as far as they are needful for them: And mercy, viz. an interest in the free love and favour of God in Christ, which is the spring and fountain of all other blessings. A foundation is laid for these in that gracious change which is wrought in them; and while they behave themselves as new creatures, and govern their lives and hopes by the rule of the gospel, they may most assuredly depend upon them: And these he declares shall be the portion of *all the Israel of God*, by whom he means all sincere Christians, whether Jews or Gentiles; all that are Israelites indeed, who, though they may not be the natural, yet are become the spiritual seed of Abraham; these being heirs of his faith, are also heirs together with him of the same promise, and consequently intitled to the peace and mercy here spoken of. The Jews and Judaizing teachers were for confining these blessings only to such as were circumcised and kept the law of Moses; but, on the contrary, the apostle declares that they belong to all who walk according to the rule of the gospel, or of the new creature, even to all the Israel of God; intimating, that those only are the true Israel of God, who walk according to this rule, and not that of circumcision, which *they* insisted so much upon; and therefore that this was the true way to obtain peace and mercy. Note, 1. That real Christians are such as walk

by rule, not a rule of their own devising, but that which God himself has prescribed to them. 2. That even those who walk according to this rule, do yet stand in need of the mercy of God. But, 3. That all who sincerely endeavour to walk according to this rule, may be assured that peace and mercy shall be upon them: this is the best way to have peace with God, ourselves, and others; and hereupon, as we may be sure of the favour of God now, so that we shall find mercy with him hereafter.

(4.) That he had cheerfully suffered persecution for the sake of Christ and Christianity, *ver.* 17. As the cross of Christ, or the doctrine of salvation by a crucified Redeemer, was what he chiefly gloried in; so he had been willing to run all hazards rather than he would betray this truth, or suffer it to be corrupted. The false teachers were afraid of persecution, and this was the great reason why they were so zealous for circumcision, as we see, *ver.* 12. But this was the least of Paul's concern; he was not moved at any of the afflictions he met with, *nor did he count his life dear to him, so that he might finish his course with joy, and the ministry which he had received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God, Acts xx. 24.* He had already suffered much in the cause of Christ, for *he bore in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus*; the scars of those wounds which he had sustained from persecuting enemies, for his steady adherence to him, and that doctrine of the gospel which he had received from him. And as from hence it appeared that he was firmly persuaded of the *truth and importance* of it, and that he was far from being a favourer of circumcision, as they had falsely reported him to be; so hereupon, with a becoming warmth and vehemence, suitable to his authority as an apostle, and to the deep concern of mind he was under, he insists upon it, *that no man should henceforth trouble him*, viz. by opposing his doctrine and authority, or by any such calumnies and reproaches as had been cast upon him: for as both from what he had said, and what he had suffered, they appeared to be highly unjust and injurious; so also that they were very unreasonable who either raised or received them.

Note, 1. That it may justly be presumed men are fully persuaded of those truths, which they are willing to suffer in the defence of. And, 2. That it is very unjust to charge those things upon others, which are contrary not only to their profession, but their sufferings too.

The apostle having now finished what he intended to write for the conviction and recovery of the churches of Galatia, concludes the epistle with his apostolical benediction, *ver.* 18. he calls them his *brethren*, wherein he shews his great humility, and the tender affection he had for them, notwithstanding the ill treatment he had met with from them; and takes his leave of them with this very serious and affectionate prayer, *that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ may be with their spirit.* This was an usual farewell wish of the apostle's, as we see, *Rom. xvi. 20, 24.* and *1 Cor. xvi. 23.* And herein he prays, that they might enjoy the favour of Christ both in the special effects and the sensible evidences of it, that they might receive from him all that grace which was needful to guide them in their way, to strengthen them in their work, to establish them in their Christian course, and to encourage and comfort them under all the trials of life, and the prospect of death itself. This is fitly called *the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ*, as he is both the sole purchaser and the appointed dispenser of it: And though these churches had done enough to forfeit it, by suffering themselves to be drawn into an opinion and practice, which was highly dishonourable to Christ, as well as dangerous to them; yet out of his great concern for them, and knowing of what importance it was to them, he earnestly desires it on their behalf; yea, that it might *be with their spirit*, that they might continually experience the influences of it upon their souls disposing and enabling to act with sincerity and uprightness in religion. We need desire no more to make us happy than the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ: This the apostle begs for these Christians, and therein shews us what we are chiefly concerned to obtain; and both for their and our encouragement to hope for it, he adds his *amen.*

A N

E X P O S I T I O N

O F T H E

Epistle of St. PAUL to the EPHESIANS,

W I T H

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS.

Some think that this epistle to the Ephesians was a circular letter sent to several churches; and that the copy directed to the Ephesians happened to be taken into the canon, and so it came to bear that particular inscription. And they have been induced the rather to think this, because it is the only one of all St. Paul's epistles, that has nothing in it peculiarly adapted to the state or case of that particular church; but has much of common concernment to all Christians; and especially of all, who having been Gentiles in times past, were converted to Christianity. But then it may be observed, on the other hand, that the epistle is expressly inscribed [chap. i. ver. 1.] to the saints which are at Ephesus: And in the close of it he tells them that he had sent Tychicus unto them, whom in 2 Tim. iv. 12. he says, he had sent to Ephesus.

It is an epistle that bears date out of a prison: And some have observed that what this apostle wrote when he was a prisoner, had the greatest relish and savour in it of the things of GOD. When his tribulations did abound, his consolations and experiences did much more abound. From whence we may observe that the afflictive exercises of GOD's people, and particularly of his ministers, do oftentimes tend to the advantage of others, as well as to their own.

The apostle's design is to settle and establish the Ephesians in the truth; and further to acquaint them with the mystery of the gospel in order to it. In the former part he represents the great privilege of the Ephesians, who being in time past idolatrous heathens, were now converted to Christianity and received into covenant with GOD, which he illustrates from a view of their deplorable state before their conversion, chap. i. 2, 3. In the latter part (which we have in the 4th, 5th, and 6th chapters) he instructs them in the principal duties of religion, both personal and relative; and exhorts and quickens them to the faithful discharge of them. Zanchy observes, that we have here an epitome of the whole Christian doctrine, and of almost all the chief heads of divinity.

CHAP.

C H A P. I.

In this chapter we have, (1.) The introduction to the whole epistle, which is much the same as in others, ver. 1, 2. (2.) The apostle's thanksgivings and praises to God for his inestimable blessings bestowed on the believing Ephesians, ver. 3—14. (3.) His earnest prayers to God in their behalf, ver. 15—23. This great apostle was wont to abound in prayers, and in thanksgivings to almighty God: which he generally so disposes and orders, as that at the same time they carry with them, and convey the great and important doctrines of the Christian religion, and the most weighty instructions to all those who seriously peruse them.

1. **P**AUL an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus:
2. Grace be to you, and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Here is, 1. The title St. Paul takes to himself, as belonging to him: *Paul an apostle of Jesus Christ, &c.* He reckoned it a great honour to be employed by Christ, as one of his messengers to the sons of men. The apostles were prime officers, in the Christian church, being extraordinary ministers appointed for a time only. They were furnished by their great Lord with extraordinary gifts, and the immediate assistance of the Spirit, that they might be fitted for publishing and spreading the gospel, and for the governing the church in its infant-state. Such an one St. Paul was, and that not by the will of man conferring that office upon him; nor by his own intrusion into it; but by the will of God, very expressly and plainly signified to him; he being immediately called (as the other apostles were) by Christ himself, to the work: And every faithful minister of Christ (though his call and office are not of so extraordinary a nature, yet) may, with our apostle, reflect on it as an honour and comfort to himself, that he is what he is by the will of God. 2. The persons to whom this epistle is sent: *To the saints which are at Ephesus*, i. e. to the Christians who were members of the church at Ephesus, the metropolis of Asia. He calls them *saints*, for so they were in profession, and such they were bound to be in truth and reality; and many of them were so. All Christians must be saints; and if they come not under that character on earth, they will never be saints in glory. He calls them *the faithful in Christ Jesus*, i. e. believers in him, and firm and constant in their adherence to him, and to his truths and ways. They are not *saints* who are not *faithful*, believing in Christ, firmly adhering to him, and true to the profession they make of relation to their Lord. Note, *It is not only the honour of ministers, but of private Christians too, to have obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful.*—In Christ Jesus, from whom they derive all their grace and spiritual strength; and in whom their persons, and all that they perform are made accepted. 3. The apostolical benediction: *Grace be to you, &c.* This is the token in every epistle; and it speaks the apostle's good will to his friends, and a real desire of their welfare. By grace we are to understand the free and undeserved love and favour of God, and those graces of the Spirit which proceed from it: by peace all other blessings, spiritual and temporal, the fruits and product of the former. No peace without grace. No peace, nor grace, but from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. These peculiar blessings proceed from God, not as a Creator, but as a Father by special relation. And they come from our Lord Jesus Christ, who having purchased them for his people, has a right to bestow them upon them. Indeed the saints, and the faithful in Christ Jesus, had already received grace and peace; but the increase of these is very desirable, and the best saints stand in need of fresh supplies of the graces of the Spirit, and cannot but desire to improve and grow: and therefore they should pray, each one for himself, and for one another, that such blessings may still abound unto them.

After this short introduction, he comes to the matter and body of the epistle; and though it may seem somewhat peculiar in a letter, yet the Spirit of God saw fit that his discourse of divine things in this chapter, should be cast into prayers and praises; which as they are solemn addresses to God, so they convey weighty instructions to others. *Prayer may preach; and praise may do so too.*

3. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: 4. According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love: 5. Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, 6. To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved: 7. In whom we

No. cx.

have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; 8. Wherein he hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence, 9. Having made known unto us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself: 10. That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him: 11. In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: 12. That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. 13. In whom ye also trusted after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, 14. Which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

He begins with thanksgivings and praise, and enlarges with a great deal of fluency and copiousness of affection upon the exceeding great and precious benefits which we enjoy by Jesus Christ. *For the great privileges of our religion are very aptly recounted and enlarged upon in our praises to God.*

In general, ver. 3. He blesses God for spiritual blessings; where he styles him *the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*: for as Mediator, the Father was his God; as God, and the second person in the blessed Trinity, God was his Father. And it speaks the mystical union betwixt Christ and believers, that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is their God and Father; and that in and through him. All blessings come from God, as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. No good can be expected from a righteous and holy God to sinful creatures, but by his mediation. *He hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings.* Note *Spiritual blessings are the best blessings with which God blesteth us, and for which we are to bless him.* HE blesses US by bestowing such things upon us as make us really blessed. WE cannot thus bless God again; but must do it by praising, and magnifying, and speaking well of him on that account: and whom God blesses with some, he blesses with all spiritual blessings. To whom he gives Christ, he freely gives all these things. It is not so with temporal blessings; some are favoured with health, and not with riches; some with riches, and not with health, &c. But where God blesses with spiritual blessings, he blesses with all. They are *spiritual blessings in heavenly places*, i. e. say some, in the church distinguished from the world, and called out of it. Or, it may be read in *heavenly things*, such as come from heaven, and are designed to prepare men for it, and to secure their reception into it. We should hence learn to mind spiritual and heavenly things as the principal things, spiritual and heavenly blessings as the best blessings, with which we cannot be miserable, and without which we cannot but be so. *Set not your affections on things on the earth, but on those things which are above.* These we are blessed with in Christ: for as all our services ascend to God through Christ, so all our blessings are conveyed to us the same way; he being the mediator betwixt God and us.

The particular spiritual blessings with which we are blessed in Christ, and for which we ought to bless God, are [many of them] here enumerated and enlarged upon.

1. Election and predestination, which are the secret springs from whence the others flow, ver. 4, 5, and 11. Election, or choice, respects that lump, or mass of mankind out of which some are chosen, from which they are separated and distinguished. Predestination hath respect to the blessings they are designed for; particularly the adoption of children: it being the purpose of God, that in due time we should become his adopted children, and so have a right to all the privileges, and to the inheritance of children. We have here the date of this act of love; it was before the foundation of the world: not only before God's people had a being, but before the world had a beginning: for they were chosen in the counsel of God from all eternity. And it magnifies these blessings to a high degree, that they are the product of eternal counsel. The alms which you give to beggars at your doors, proceed from a sudden resolve; but the provision which a parent makes for his children, is the result of many thoughts, and is put into his last will and testament with a great deal of solemnity. And as this magnifies divine love, so it secures the blessings to God's elect; for the purpose of God according to election shall stand. He acts in pursuance of his eternal purpose in bestowing spiritual blessings upon his people. *He hath blessed us*—according as he hath chosen us in him, i. e. in Christ the great head of the election, who is emphatically called God's elect, his chosen; and in the chosen Redeemer an eye of favour was cast upon them. Observe here one great end and design of this choice: *chosen—that we should be holy*; not because he foresaw they would be holy, but because he determined to make them so. *All who are chosen to happiness as the end, are chosen to holiness as the means.*

Their sanctification, as well as their salvation, is the result of the counsels of divine love. *And without blame before him*; i. e. that their holiness might not be only external, and in outward appearance, so as to prevent blame from men; but internal and real, and what God himself will account such, who *looketh at the heart*: such holiness proceeding from love, i. e. to God and to our fellow-creatures; this charity being the principle of all true holiness. The original word signifies such an innocence as no man can carp at; and therefore some understand it of that perfect holiness that the saints shall attain to in the life to come, which will be eminently *before God*; they being in his immediate presence for ever.

Here is also the rule, and the fountal cause of God's election; it is *according to the good pleasure of his will*, ver. 5. not for the sake of any thing in them foreseen, but because it was his sovereign will, and a thing highly pleasing to him. It is *according to the purpose*, i. e. the fixed and unalterable will of him, who *worketh all things after the counsel of his own will*, ver. 11. who powerfully accomplishes whatever concerns his elect, as he has wisely and freely fore-ordained and decreed: the last and great end and design of all which is his own glory. *To the praise of the glory of his grace*, ver. 6. *That we should be to the praise of his glory*, ver. 12. i. e. that we should live and behave ourselves in such a manner that his rich grace might be magnified, and appear glorious and worthy of the highest praise. *All is of God, and from him and through him*, and therefore all must be *to him*, and center in his praise. Note, *The glory of God is his own end, and it should be ours in all that we do**. The next spiritual blessing the apostle takes notice of, is

2. Acceptance with God through Jesus Christ. *Wherein*, or by which grace, *he hath made us accepted in the beloved*, ver. 6. Jesus Christ is the beloved of his Father, (Matt. iii. 17.) as well as of angels and saints. It is our great privilege to be accepted of God, which implies his love to us, and his taking us under his care, and into his family. We cannot be thus accepted of God, but in and through Jesus Christ. He loves his people for the sake of the beloved.

3. Remission of sins and redemption through the blood of Jesus, ver. 7. No remission without redemption. It was by reason of sin that we were captivated; and we cannot be released from our captivity, but by the remission of our sins. This redemption we have in Christ, and this remission through his blood. The guilt and the stain of sin could be no otherwise removed than by the blood of Jesus. All our spiritual blessings flow down to us in that stream. This great benefit which comes freely to us, was dearly bought and paid for by our blessed Lord: and yet it is *according to the riches of God's grace*. Christ's satisfaction and God's rich grace are very consistent in the great affair of man's redemption. God was satisfied by Christ as our substitute and surety; but it was *rich grace* that would accept of a surety, when he might have executed the severity of the law upon the transgressor: and it was *rich grace* to provide such a surety as his own son, and freely to deliver him up, when nothing of that nature could have entered into our thoughts, or have been any otherwise found out for us. In which instance he has not only manifested *riches of grace*, but *hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence*, ver. 8. *Wisdom* in contriving the dispensation, and *prudence* in executing the counsel of his will, as he has done. How illustrious have the divine wisdom and prudence rendered themselves in so happily adjusting the matter between justice and mercy in this grand affair; in securing the honour of God and his law, at the same time that the recovery of sinners and their salvation are ascertained and made sure?

4. Another privilege which the apostle here blesteth God for, is divine revelation, that God hath *made known to us the mystery of his will*, ver. 9. i. e. so much of his good will to men, which had been *concealed* for a long time, and is still concealed from so great a part of the world: this we owe to Christ, who having laid in the bosom of the Father from eternity, came to declare his will to the children of men. *According to his good pleasure*, i. e. his secret counsels concerning man's redemption, *which he had purposed*, or resolved upon, *merely in and from himself*, and not for any thing in them. In this revelation, and in his *making known unto us the mystery of his will*, the wisdom and the prudence of God do abundantly shine forth. It is described at ver. 13. *as the word of truth, and the gospel of our salvation*. Every word of it is true; it contains and instructs us in the most weighty and important truths, and it is confirmed and sealed by the very oath of God: From whence we should learn to *betake ourselves to it in all our searches after divine truth*. It is *the gospel of our salvation*. It publishes the glad tidings of salvation, and contains the offer of it. It points out the way that leads to it; and the blessed Spirit renders the reading and the ministration of it effectual to the salvation of souls. Oh, how ought we to prize this glorious gospel, and to bless God for it! This is the *light shining in a dark place*, for which we have reason to be thankful, and to which we should take heed.

5. Union in, and with, Christ, is a great privilege, a spiritual blessing and the foundation of many others. *He does gather together in one all things in Christ*, ver. 10. All the lines of divine revelation meet in Christ; all religion centers in him. Jews and Gentiles were united to each other by being both united to Christ. *Things in heaven, and things on earth*, are gathered together in him. Peace made, correspondence settled betwixt heaven and earth through him. The innumerable company of angels become one with the church through Christ. This God *purposed in himself*, and it was his design in that *dispensation* which was to be accomplished by his sending of Christ *in the fulness of times*, i. e. at the exact time that God had prefixed and settled.

6. The eternal inheritance is the great blessing with which we are blessed in Christ. *In whom also we have obtained an inheritance*, ver. 11. Heaven is the inheritance, the happiness of which is a sufficient portion for a soul. It is conveyed in the way of an inheritance; being the gift of a father to his children. *If children, then heirs*. All the blessings that we have in hand, are but small if compared with the inheritance. What is laid out upon an heir in his minority, is nothing to what is reserved for him when he comes to age. Christians are said to *have obtained* this inheritance, as they have a present right to it; and even actual possession of it, *in Christ* their head and representative.

7. The seal and earnest of the Spirit are of the number of these blessings. We are said to be *sealed with that holy Spirit of promise*, ver. 13. The blessed Spirit is holy himself, and he makes us holy. He is called *the Spirit of promise*, as he is the promised Spirit. By him *believers are sealed*, that is, separated and set apart for God, and distinguished and marked as belonging to him. *The Spirit is the earnest of our inheritance*, ver. 14. *The earnest* is part of payment, and it secures the full sum. So is the gift of the Holy Ghost; all his influences and operations, both as a sanctifier and comforter, are heaven begun, glory in the seed and bud. The Spirit's illumination is an *earnest* of everlasting light; sanctification is an earnest of perfect holiness, and his comforts are earnest of everlasting joys. He is said to be the earnest, *until the redemption of the purchased possession*. It may be called here *the possession*, because this *earnest* makes it as sure to the heirs, as though they were already possessed of it; and it is *purchased* for them by the blood of Christ. The *redemption* of it is mentioned, because it was mortgaged and forfeited by sin, and Christ restores it to us, and so is said to redeem it in allusion to the law of redemption. Observe from all this, *what a gracious promise that is, which secures the gift of the Holy Ghost to them who ask him*.

The apostle mentions the great end and design of God in bestowing each one, and all these spiritual privileges; *that we should be to the praise of his glory who first trusted in Christ*, i. e. we to whom the gospel was first preached, and who were first converted to the faith of Christ, and to the placing our hope and trust in him. Note, *Seniority in grace is a preferment*. *Who were in Christ before me*, says the apostle, (Rom. xvi. 7.) and they who have for a longer time experienced the grace of Christ, are under more special obligations to glorify God. They should be strong in faith, and more eminently glorify him; but this should be the common end of all. For this we were made, and for this we were redeemed; this is the great design of our Christianity, and of God in all that he has done for us. *Unto the praise of his glory*, ver. 14. He intends that his grace and power, and other perfections should by this means become conspicuous and illustrious, and that the sons of men should magnify him.

15. Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, 16. Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; 17. That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of him: 18. The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, 19. And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power; 20. Which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, 21. Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: 22. And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, 23. Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

We are come to the last part of this chapter, which consists of St. Paul's earnest prayer to God in behalf of these Ephesians: *We should pray for the persons, for whom we give thanks*. Our apostle blesses God for what he had done for them, and then he prays

* This passage has been understood by some in a very different sense, and with a special reference to the conversion of these Ephesians to Christianity. Those who have a mind to see what is said to this purpose, may consult Mr. Locke, and other well known writers, on the place.

rays he would do more for them: He gives thanks for spiritual blessings, and prays for further supplies of them. For *God will for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do for them.* He has laid up these spiritual blessings for us in the hands of his Son the Lord Jesus; but then he has appointed us to draw them out, and fetch them in by prayer. We have no part nor lot in the matter, any further than we claim it by faith and prayer.

One inducement to pray for them was the good account he had of them, *of their faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints,* ver. 15. Faith in Christ, and love to the saints, will be attended with all other graces: Love to the saints, as such, and because they are such, must include love to God. They who love saints, as such, love all saints, how weak in grace, how mean in the world, how fretful and peevish soever some of them may be. Another inducement to pray for them was because they had received the earnest of the inheritance: This we may observe from the words being connected with the preceding ones by the particle *wherefore*. Perhaps you will think, that having received the earnest, it should follow, therefore ye are happy enough, and need take no further care: You need not pray for yourselves, nor I for you. No, quite the contrary. *Wherefore—I cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers,* ver. 16. While he blesses God for giving them the Spirit, he ceases not to pray that he would give unto them the Spirit, ver. 17. *i. e.* that he would give greater measures of the Spirit. Observe, *Even the best of Christians need to be prayed for: And while we hear well of our Christian friends, we should think ourselves obliged to intercede with God for them, that they may abound and increase yet more and more.*

Now what is it that St. Paul prays for in their behalf? Why, not that they might be freed from persecution; nor that they might possess the riches, honours, or pleasures of the world: But the great thing he prays for, is the illumination of their understandings, and that their knowledge might increase and abound: He means it of a practical and experimental knowledge. The graces and comforts of the Spirit, are communicated to the soul by the enlightning of the understanding. In this way he gains, and keeps possession. Satan takes a contrary way, he gets possession by the senses and passions; Christ by the understanding.

Observe, 1. Whence this knowledge must come; from *the God of our Lord Jesus Christ,* ver. 17. The Lord is a God of knowledge: And there is no sound, saving knowledge but what comes from him, and therefore to him we must look for it, who is *the God of our Lord Jesus Christ,* see ver. 3. *And the Father of glory.* It is an Hebraism; God is infinitely glorious in himself; all glory is due to him from his creatures, and he is the author of all that glory, with which his saints are, or shall be invested. Now he gives knowledge, by giving *the Spirit of knowledge*; for the Spirit of God is the teacher of the saints. *The Spirit of wisdom and revelation.* We have the revelation of the Spirit in the word: But will that avail us, if we have not *the wisdom of the Spirit in the heart*? If the same Spirit who indited the sacred scriptures, do not take the veil from off our hearts, and enable us to understand and improve them, we shall be never the better. *In the knowledge of him,* or, for the acknowledgment of him; not only a speculative knowledge of Christ, and of what relates to him, but an acknowledgment of Christ's authority by an obedient conformity to him, which must be by the help of *the Spirit of wisdom and revelation.* This knowledge is first in the understanding. He prays that *the eyes of their understanding may be enlightned,* ver. 18. Observe, *Those who have their eyes opened, and have some understanding in the things of God, have need to be more and more enlightned*; and to have their knowledge more clear and distinct and experimental. Christians should not think it enough to have warm affections, but they should labour to have clear understandings; they should be ambitious of being knowing Christians, and judicious Christians.

2. What is it he more particularly desires they should grow in the knowledge of? 1. *The hope of his calling,* ver. 18. Christianity is our calling. God has called us to it, and on that account it is said to be *his calling*. There is a *hope* in this calling; for those who deal with God deal upon trust: And it is a desirable thing to know what this hope of our calling is, *i. e.* to have such an acquaintance with the immense privileges of God's people, and the expectations they have from God, and with respect to the heavenly world, as to be quickned thereby to the utmost diligence and patience in the Christian course. *We ought to labour after, and pray earnestly for, a clearer insight into, and a fuller acquaintance with, the great objects of a Christian's hopes and expectations.* 2. *The riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.* Besides the heavenly inheritance prepared for the saints, there is a present inheritance in the saints. For grace is glory begun, and holiness is happiness in the bud. There is a *glory* in this inheritance; *riches of glory*, rendring the Christian more excellent, and more truly honourable than all about him: And it is desirable to know this experimentally; to be acquainted with the principles, pleasures and powers of the spiritual and divine life. It may be understood of the glorious inheritance in, or among the saints in heaven, where God does, as it were, lay forth all his riches to make them happy

and glorious, and where all that the saints are in possession of, is transcendently glorious: As much knowledge of which as is attainable upon earth, is very desirable, and must be exceedingly entertaining and delightful. Let us endeavour then by reading, contemplation, and prayer, to know as much of heaven as we can, that we may be desiring and longing to be there. 3. *The exceeding greatness of God's power towards them who believe,* ver. 19. The practical belief of the all-sufficiency of God, and of the omnipotence of divine grace, is absolutely necessary to a close and steady walking with him. It is a desirable thing to know experimentally the mighty power of that grace beginning and carrying on the work of faith in our souls. It is a difficult thing to bring a soul to believe fully in Christ, and to venture its all upon his righteousness, and upon the hope of eternal life. It is nothing less than an almighty power that will work this in us. The apostle speaks here with a mighty fluency and copiousness of expression, and yet at the same time, as if he wanted words to express *the exceeding greatness of God's almighty power*, that power which God exerts towards his people, and by which he raised Christ from the dead, ver. 20. That indeed was the great proof of the truth of the gospel to the world: But the transcript of that in ourselves, (*i. e.* our sanctification, and rising from the death of sin in conformity to Christ's resurrection) is the great proof to us. Though this cannot prove the truth of the gospel to another who knows nothing of the matter (there the resurrection of Christ is the proof) yet to be able to speak experimentally, as the Samaritans, *we have heard him ourselves*, we have felt a mighty change in our own hearts, will make us able to say, with the fullest satisfaction, *Now we believe, and are sure, that this is the Christ, the Son of God.* Many understand the apostle here as speaking of that *exceeding greatness of power*, which God will exert for the raising the bodies of believers to eternal life, even the same *mighty power which he wrought in Christ when he raised him*, &c. And how desirable a thing must it be to become acquainted with that power at length, by being raised out of the grave thereby unto eternal life?

Having said something of Christ and his resurrection, the apostle digresses a little from the subject he is upon, to make some further honourable mention of the Lord Jesus and his exaltation. He is *set at the Father's right hand in the heavenly places*, &c. ver. 20, 21. Jesus Christ is advanced above all, and he is set in authority over all, they being made subject to him. All the glory of the upper world, and all the powers of both worlds are entirely devoted to him. The Father *hath put all things under his feet*, ver. 22. according to the promise, *Psal. cx. 1.* All creatures whatsoever are in subjection to him; that they must either yield him sincere obedience, or fall under the weight of his scepter, and receive their doom, from him. God *GAVE him to be head over all things.* It was a gift to Christ, considered as mediator, to be advanced to such dominion and headship, and to such a mystical body prepared for him: And it was a gift to the church, to be provided with a head, endued with so much and power and authority. God *gave him to be the head [over all things:]* He gave him all power both in heaven and in earth. *The Father loves the Son, and hath given ALL things into his hands.* But that which completes the comfort of this is, that he is the head over all things to the church, *i. e.* he is therefore intrusted with all power, that he may dispose of all the affairs of the providential kingdom in subserviency to the designs of his grace concerning his church. With this therefore we may answer the messengers of the nations, that the Lord hath founded Sion. The same power that supports the world, supports the church; and we are sure he loves his church, for it is *his body*, ver. 23. his mystical body, and he will care for it. It is *the fulness of him that filleth all in all.* Jesus Christ filleth all in all; he supplies all defects in all his members, filling them with his Spirit, and even with *the fulness of God*, chap. iii. 19. And yet the church is said to be *his fulness*; because Christ as mediator would not be complete, if he had not a church. How could he be a king if he had not a kingdom? This therefore comes into the honour of Christ, *as mediator, that the church is his fulness.*

C H A P. II.

This chapter contains an account, (1.) Of the miserable condition of these Ephesians by nature, ver. 1—3. and again, ver. 11, 12. (2.) Of the glorious change that was wrought in them by converting grace, ver. 4—10. and again, ver. 13. (3.) Of the great and mighty privileges that converted Jews and Gentiles both receive from Christ, ver. 14—22.

The apostle endeavours to affect them with a due sense of the wonderful change which divine grace had wrought in them; and this is very applicable to that great change, which the same grace works in all those who are brought into a state of grace: So that we have here a lively picture both of the misery of unregenerate men, and of the happy condition of converted souls; enough to awaken and alarm those who are yet in their sins, and to put them upon hastning out of that state; and to comfort and delight those whom God hath quickened, with a consideration of the mighty privileges with which they are invested.

1. **A**ND you *hath be quickned* who were dead in trespasses and sins, 2. Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. 3. Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

The miserable condition of the Ephesians by nature, is here in part described. Observe,

1. That unregenerate souls are *dead in trespasses and sins*. All those who are in their sins, *are dead in sins*; yea, *in trespasses and sins*: Which may signify all sorts of sins, habitual and actual; sins of heart and of life. *Sin is the death of the soul*. Wherever that prevails, there is a privation of all spiritual life. Sinners are *dead in state*, being destitute of the principles and powers of spiritual life; and cut off from God, the fountain of life: And they are dead in law, as a condemned malefactor is said to be a dead man.

2. A state of sin is a state of conformity to this world, *ver.* 2. In the first verse he speaks of their internal state, in this of their outward conversation. *Wherein*, i. e. in which trespasses and sins, *in time past ye walked*, &c. i. e. you lived and behaved your selves in such a manner as the men of the world are used to do.

3. We are by nature bond-slaves to sin and Satan. They who walk in trespasses and sins, and according to the course of this world, walk *according to the prince of the power of the air*. The devil, or the prince of devils, is thus described. See *Matt.* xii. 24, 26. The legions of apostate angels are as one power united under one chief; and therefore what is called *the powers of darkness* elsewhere, is here spoken of in the singular number. *The air* is represented as the seat of his kingdom. And it was the opinion of the Jews and heathens both, that the air is full of spirits, and that there they exercise and exert themselves. The devil seems to have some power (by God's permission) in the lower region of the air; there he is at hand to tempt men, and to do as much mischief to the world as he can: But it is the comfort and joy of God's people, that he who is *head over all things to the church*, hath conquered the devil, and has him in his chain: But wicked men are slaves to Satan, for they *walk according to him*, i. e. they conform their lives and actions to the will and pleasure of this great usurper. The course and tenor of their lives are according to his suggestions, and in compliance with his temptations; that they are subject to him, and are led captive by him at his will; whereupon he is called *the God of this world*, and *the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience*. The children of disobedience are such as choose to disobey god, and to serve the devil; in these he *works* very powerfully and effectually. As the good Spirit works that which is good in obedient souls, so this evil spirit works that which is evil in wicked men; and he *now* works, not only heretofore, but even since the world has been blessed with the light of the glorious gospel. The apostle adds, *among whom also we all had our conversation in times past*, which words refer to the Jews, whom he signifies here to have been in the like sad and miserable condition by nature, and to have been as vile and wicked as the unregenerate Gentiles themselves; and whose natural state he further describes in the next words.

4. We are by nature drudges to the flesh, and to our corrupt affections, *ver.* 3. By *fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind*, men contract that filthiness of flesh and spirit which the apostle exhorts Christians to cleanse themselves from, *2 Cor.* vii. 1. That the *fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind*, includes all that sin and wickedness that are acted in, and by, both the inferior and the higher and nobler powers of the soul. We lived in the actual commission of all those sins corrupt nature inclined us unto. *The carnal mind makes a man a perfect slave to his vicious appetite*.—*Fulfilling [the wills] of the flesh*, &c. so the word may be rendered; noting the efficacy of these lusts, and what power they have over those who yield themselves up unto them.

5. We are *by nature the children of wrath, even as others*. The Jews were so as well as the Gentiles; and one man is as much so as another *by nature*, i. e. not only by custom and imitation, but from the time when we began to exist, and by reason of our natural inclinations and appetites. *All men being naturally children of disobedience, are also by nature children of wrath*; God is angry with the wicked every day. Our state and course are such as deserve wrath, and would end in eternal wrath, if divine grace did not interpose. What reason have sinners then to be looking out for that grace that will make them of children of wrath, children of God, and heirs of glory? Thus far the apostle has described the misery of a natural state in these verses, which we shall find him pursuing again in some following ones.

4. But God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, 5. Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickned us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved) 6. And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. 7. That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us, through Christ Jesus. 8. For by grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is the gift of God*: 9. Not of works, lest any man should boast: 10. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. 11. Wherefore remember that ye *being* in time passed Gentiles in the flesh, who are called uncircumcision by that which is called the circumcision in the flesh made by hands; 12. That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the common-wealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: 13. But now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

Here the apostle begins his account of the glorious change that was wrought in them by converting grace; where observe,

1. By whom, and in what manner, it was brought about and effected. (1.) Negatively, *not of your selves*, *ver.* 8. Our faith, our conversion, and our eternal salvation, are not the mere product of any natural abilities, or of any merit of our own. *Not of works, lest any man should boast*, *ver.* 9. These things are not brought to pass by any thing done by us, and therefore all boasting is excluded: That he who glories must not glory in himself, but in the Lord. There is no room for any man's boasting of his own abilities and power; or as though he had done any thing that might deserve such immense favours from God. (2.) Positively; *But God who is rich in mercy*, &c. *ver.* 4. God himself is the author of this great and happy change, and his great *love* is the spring and fontal cause of it; from thence he resolved to shew mercy. *Love* is his inclination to do us good, considered simply as creatures: *Mercy* respects us as apostate and as miserable creatures. Observe, God's *eternal love of good-will towards his creatures, is the fountain from whence all his mercies vouchsafed to us proceed*; and that love of God is *great love*, and that mercy of his is *rich mercy*; inexpressibly great and inexhaustibly rich. And then *by grace ye are saved*, *ver.* 5. and *by grace are ye saved through faith*,—*It is the gift of God*, *ver.* 8. Note, *Every converted sinner is a saved sinner*, such as delivered from sin and wrath; they are brought into a state of salvation, and have a right given them by grace to eternal happiness. The *grace* that saves them is the free undeserved goodness and favour of God; and he saves them, not *by the works of the law*, but *through faith* in Christ Jesus, by means of which they come to partake of the great blessings of the gospel; and both that faith, and that salvation, on which it has so great an influence, are *the gift of God*. The great objects of faith are made known by divine revelation, and made credible by the testimony and evidence which God hath given us; and that we believe to salvation, and obtain salvation through faith, is entirely owing to divine assistance and grace; God has ordered all so that the whole shall appear to be of *grace*.

Observe, 2. Wherein this change consists. In several particulars, answering to the misery of our natural state; some of which are enumerated in this section, and others are mentioned below. (1.) We who were dead are *quickened*, *ver.* 5. i. e. we are saved from the death of sin, and have a principle of spiritual life implanted in us. *Grace in the soul is a new life in the soul*. As death locks up the senses, seals up all the powers and faculties; so doth a state of sin, as to any thing that is good; grace unlocks and opens all, and enlarges the soul. Observe, *A regenerate sinner becomes a living soul*: He lives a life of sanctification, being born of God; and he lives in the sense of the law, being delivered from the guilt of sin by pardoning and justifying grace: *He hath quickned us [together with Christ]*; our spiritual life results from our union with Christ; it is in him that we live: *Because I live, ye shall live also*. (2.) We who were buried are raised up, *ver.* 6. What remains yet to be done, is here spoken of as though it were already passed; *though* indeed we are raised up in virtue of our union with him, whom God hath raised from the dead. When he raised Christ from the dead, he did in effect raise up all believers *together* with him, he being their common head; and when he placed him at his right hand *in heavenly places*; he advanced and glorified them *in* and with him, their raised and exalted head and forerunner. *And made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus*. This may be understood in another sense; sinners roll themselves in the dust; sanctified souls sit

fit in heavenly places, are raised above the world; the world is as nothing to them, compared with what it has been, and compared with what the other world is. *Saints* are not only Christ's free-men, but they are assessors with him; by the assistance of his grace they have ascended with him above this world, to converse with another; and they live in the constant expectation of it. They are not only servants to the best of masters in the best work, but they are exalted to reign with him; they sit upon the throne with Christ, *as he is set down with his Father on his throne.*

3. Observe what is the great design and aim of God in producing and effecting this change: And this, (1.) With respect to others; *that in the ages to come he might shew, &c. ver. 7. i. e.* that he might give a specimen and proof of his great goodness and mercy, for the encouragement of sinners in future time. Observe, *That the goodness of God in converting and saving sinners heretofore, is a proper encouragement to others in after-time to hope in his grace and mercy, and to apply themselves to these.* God having this in his design, poor sinners should take great encouragement from it. And what may we not hope for from such grace and kindness, from *riches of grace*, and from *exceeding riches of grace*, to which this change is owing? *Through Christ Jesus*, by and through whom God conveys all his favours and blessings to us. (2.) With respect to the regenerated sinners themselves; *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, &c. ver. 10.* It appears that all is of grace, because all our spiritual advantages are from God: *We are his workmanship*; he means in respect of the new creation; not only as men, but as saints: *The new man is a new creature*; and God is its Creator. It is a new birth, and we are born or begotten of his will. *In Christ Jesus*, i. e. on the account of what he hath done or suffered, and by the influence and operation of his blessed Spirit. *Unto good works, &c. i. e.* The apostle having before ascribed this change to divine grace, in exclusion of works; lest he should seem thereby to discourage good works, he here observes, that though the change is to be ascribed to nothing of that nature, *for we are the workmanship of God*; yet God, in this new creation, has designed and prepared us for *good works*. *Created unto good works*, i. e. with a design that we should be fruitful in them. *Wherever God by his grace implants good principles, they are intended to be for good works. Which God hath before ordained*, i. e. decreed and appointed: Or, the words may be read, *to which God hath before prepared us*, by blessing us with the knowledge of his will, and with the assistance of his holy Spirit, and by producing such a change in us. *That we should walk in them*, i. e. glorify God by an exemplary conversation, and by our perseverance in holiness.

In the eleventh and twelfth verses the apostle proceeds in his account of the miserable condition of these Ephesians by nature. *Wherefore remember, &c. ver. 11. q. d.* You should remember what you have been, and compare it with what you now are, in order to humble yourselves, and to excite your love and thankfulness to God. Note, *Converted sinners ought frequently to reflect upon the sinfulness and misery of that estate they were in by nature.* *Gentiles in the flesh*, i. e. lying in the corruption of your natures; and being destitute of circumcision, the outward sign of an interest in the covenant of grace. *Who are called uncircumcision by that, &c. i. e.* you were reproached and upbraided for it by the formal Jews, who made an external profession, and who looked no further than the outward ordinance. Note, *Hypocritical professors are wont to value themselves chiefly on their external privileges, and to reproach and despise others who are destitute of them.* The apostle describes the misery of their case in several particulars, *ver. 12. At that time*, i. e. while ye were Gentiles, and in an unconverted state, ye were, (1.) In a Christless condition, without the knowledge of the Messiah, and without any saving interest in him, or relation to him. It is true of all unconverted sinners, all those who are destitute of faith, that they have no saving interest in Christ; and it must be a sad and deplorable thing for a soul to be without Christ. Being without Christ, they were, (2.) *Aliens from the common-wealth of Israel*, i. e. they did not belong to Christ's church, and had no communion with it, that being confined to the Israelitish nation. *It is no small privilege to be placed in the church of Christ, and to share with the members of it in the advantages peculiar to it.* (3.) *They were strangers from the covenants of promise.* The covenant of grace hath ever been the same for substance; though having undergone various editions and improvements in the several ages of the church, it is called *covenants*; and the *covenants [of promise]* because it is made up of promises; and particularly contains the great promise of the Messiah, and of eternal life through him. Now the Ephesians, in their Gentilism, were *strangers from this covenant*, having never had any information or overture of it; and all unregenerate sinners are *strangers* to it, as they have no interest in it. Those who are without Christ, and so have no interest in the mediator of the covenant, have none in the promises of the covenant. (4.) They had *no hope*, i. e. beyond this life; no well-grounded hope in God; no hope of spiritual and eternal blessings. They who are without Christ, and strangers from the covenant, can have no good hope; for Christ and the covenant are the ground and foundation of all the Christian's hopes. (5.) They were in a state of distance and estrangement from God. *Without God*

in the world; not without some general knowledge of a deity, for they worshipped idols; but living without any due regard to him, any acknowledged dependence on him, and any special interest in him. The words are, *atheists in the world*; for though they worshipped *many gods*, yet they were without *the true God*.

The apostle proceeds, *ver. 13.* further to illustrate the happy change that was made in their state. *But now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off, &c.* They were far off from Christ, from his church, from the promises, from the Christian hope, and from God himself; and therefore from all good; like the prodigal son in the *far country*: this has been represented in the preceding verses. *Unconverted sinners remove themselves at a distance from God, and God puts them at a distance. He beholds the proud afar off. But now in Christ Jesus, &c. i. e.* upon their conversion, by virtue of their union with Christ, and their interest in him by faith, *are made nigh*: They were brought home to God, received into the church, taken into the covenant, and possessed of all other privileges consequent upon these. Note, *The saints are a people near to God. Salvation is far from the wicked*; but God is a help at hand to his people; and this is *by the blood of Christ*, i. e. by the merit of his sufferings and death. *Every believing sinner owes his nearness to God, and his interest in his favour, to the death and sacrifice of Christ.*

14. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; 15. Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, *even* the law of commandments contained in ordinances, for to make himself, of twain, one new man, *so* making peace; 16. And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: 17. And came, and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. 18. For through him we both have an access by one Spirit unto the Father. 19. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; 20. And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone; 21. In whom all the building fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: 22. In whom you also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

We are now come to the last part of the chapter, which contains an account of the great and mighty privileges that converted Jews and Gentiles both receive from Christ. The apostle here shews that they who were in a state of enmity are reconciled. Betwixt the Jews and the Gentiles there had been a great enmity; so there is betwixt God and every unregenerate man. Now Jesus Christ *is our peace*, *ver. 14.* He made peace by the sacrifice of himself; and came to reconcile, 1. Jews and Gentiles to each other. He *made both one*, by reconciling these two divisions of men, who were wont to malign, to hate, and to reproach each other before. He *broke down the middle wall of partition*, viz. the ceremonial law that made the great feud, and was the badge of the Jews peculiarity; called *the partition-wall*, by way of allusion to the *partition* in the temple, which separated the court of the Gentiles from that into which the Jews only had liberty to enter. Thus he *abolished in his flesh the enmity*, *ver. 15.* By his sufferings in the flesh, taking away the binding power of the ceremonial law, so removing that cause of enmity and distance betwixt them; which is here called *the law of commandments contained in ordinances*, because it did enjoin a multitude of external rites and ceremonies, and consisted of many institutions and appointments about the outward parts of divine worship. *The legal ceremonies were abrogated by Christ, having their accomplishment in him.* By taking those out of the way, he formed one church of believers, whether they had been Jews or Gentiles. Thus he made *in himself of twain one new man*. He framed both these parties into one new society, or body of God's people, uniting them to himself as their common head; they being *renewed* by the Holy Ghost, and now concurring in a new way of gospel-worship: *So making peace*, i. e. betwixt these two parties who were so much at variance before. 2. There is an enmity betwixt God and sinners, whether Jews or Gentiles, and Christ came to slay that enmity, and to reconcile them both to God, *ver. 16.* Sin breeds a quarrel betwixt God and men; Christ came to take up the quarrel, and to bring it to an end, by reconciling both Jew and Gentile, now collected and gathered into one body, to a provoked and an offended God. And this *by the cross*; or by the sacrifice of himself upon the cross: *Having slain the enmity thereby.* He being slain or sacrificed, slew the enmity that there was betwixt God and poor sinners. The apostle proceeds to illustrate the great advantages which both parties gain by the mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ, *ver. 17.* Christ, who purchased peace on the cross, *came*, partly in his own person, as to the Jews, who are here

said to have been *nigh*; and partly in his apostles, whom he commissioned to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, who are said to have been *afar off*, in the sense that he has given before. *And preached peace*, or published the terms of reconciliation with God, and of eternal life. Note here, that *when the messengers of Christ deliver his truths, it is in effect the same as if he did it immediately himself*. He is said to preach by them; inasmuch that he who receiveth them receiveth him; and he who despiseth them (acting by virtue of his commission, and delivering his message) despiseth and rejecteth Christ himself. Now the effect of this peace is the free access, which both Jews and Gentiles have unto God, *ver. 18. For through him, &c. i. e. in his name, and by virtue of his mediation, we both have an access, i. e. admission into the presence of God, who is become the common reconciled Father of both*: The throne of grace is erected for us to come to; and liberty of approach to that throne is allowed us. Our access is by the holy Spirit; Christ purchased for us leave to come to God; and the Spirit gives us a heart to come, and strength to come, even grace to serve God acceptably. Observe, *We draw nigh to God, through Jesus Christ, by the help of the Spirit*. The Ephesians, upon their conversion, having such an access to God, as well as the Jews, and by the same Spirit, the apostle tells them, *Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, &c. ver. 19*. This he mentions by way of opposition to what he had observed of them in their heathenism: They were now no longer *aliens from the commonwealth of Israel*; and no longer what the Jews were wont to account all the nations of the earth besides themselves, *viz. strangers to God*; but *fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, i. e. members of the church of Christ, and having a right to all the privileges of it*. Observe here, that *the church is compared to a city, and every converted sinner is free of it: It is also compared to a house, and every converted sinner is one of the domesticks, one of the family; a servant, and a child in God's house*. In *ver. 20*, the church is compared to a building: The foundation of that building are the apostles and prophets. They may be so called in a secondary sense, Christ himself being the primary foundation; but we are rather to understand it of the doctrine delivered by the prophets of the Old Testament, and the apostles of the New. It follows, *Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone*: In him both Jews and Gentiles meet, and constitute one church; and Christ supports the building by his strength. *In whom all the building fitly framed together, &c. ver. 21. i. e. All believers, of which it does consist, being united to Christ by faith, and amongst themselves by Christian charity, grow unto an holy temple, become a sacred society, in which there is much communion betwixt God and his people, as in the temple; they worshipping and serving him, he manifesting himself unto them: they offering up spiritual sacrifices to God, and he dispensing his blessings and favours to them*. Thus the building, for the nature of it, is a temple, an holy temple: For the church is the place which God hath chosen to put his name there; and it becomes such a temple, by grace and strength derived from himself, *in the Lord*. The universal church being built upon Christ as the foundation-stone, and united in Christ as the corner-stone, comes, at length, to be glorified in him as the top-stone. *In whom you also are builded together, &c. ver. 22*. Observe, not only the universal church is called the temple God, but particular churches; and even every true believer is a living temple, is an habitation of God, through the Spirit. God dwells in all believers now; they being become the temple of God through the operations of the blessed Spirit; and his dwelling with them now is an earnest of their dwelling together with him to eternity.

C H A P. III.

This chapter consists of two parts. (1.) Of the account which St. Paul gives the Ephesians concerning himself, as he was appointed by God to be the apostle of the Gentiles, *ver. 1—13*. (2.) Of his devout and affectionate prayer to God for the Ephesians, *ver. 14—21*. We may observe it to have been very much the practice of this apostle to intermix, with his instructions and counsels, intercessions and prayers to God for those to whom he wrote, as knowing that all his instructions and teachings would be useless and vain, except God did co-operate with them, and render them effectual. This is an example that all the ministers of Christ should copy after: praying earnestly that the efficacious operations of the divine Spirit may attend their ministrations, and crown them with success.

1. **F**OR this cause, I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles; 2. If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God, which is given me to you-ward: 3. How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery, (as I wrote afore in few words, 4. Whereby when ye read ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) 5. Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men,

as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; 6. That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: 7. Wherefore I was made a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. 8. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; 9. And to make all men see, what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world, hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: 10. To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, 11. According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord. 12. In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him. 13. Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

Here we have the account which St. Paul gives the Ephesians concerning himself, as he was appointed by God the apostle of the Gentiles.

1. We may observe that he acquaints them with the tribulations and sufferings which he endured in the discharge of that office, *ver. 1*. The first clause refers to the preceding chapter, and may be understood either of these two ways. *For this cause*, either, (1.) For having preached the doctrine contained in the foregoing chapter, and for asserting that the great privileges of the gospel belong not only to the Jews, but to believing Gentiles also, though they are not circumcised. For this I am now a prisoner: but a prisoner of Jesus Christ, as I suffer in his cause and for his sake, and continuing his faithful servant, and the object of his special protection and care, while I am thus suffering for him. Observe, *Christ's servants, if they come to be prisoners, are his prisoners*; and he despiseth not his prisoners. He thinks never the worse of them for the ill character which the world gives them, or the evil treatment that they meet with in it. Paul adhered to Christ, and Christ owned him when he was in the prison. For you Gentiles, the Jews did therefore persecute and imprison him, because he was the apostle of the Gentiles, and preached the gospel to them. We may learn hence, that *the faithful ministers of Christ are to dispense his sacred truths, however disagreeable they may be to some, and whatever they themselves may suffer for doing so*. Or, (2.) The words may be thus understood, *For this cause, &c. i. e. since you are no more strangers and foreigners, &c. as chap. ii. 19*, but are united to Christ, and admitted into communion with his church, I Paul, who am the prisoner of Jesus Christ, &c. pray that you may be enabled to act as becomes persons thus favoured by God, and made partakers of so great privileges. To this purpose you find him expressing himself, *ver. 14*, where, after the digression contained in the several verses intervening, he proceeds with what he begun, in this first verse. Observe, *Those who have received grace and signal favours from God stand in need of prayer, that they may improve and advance, and continue to act as becomes them*. And seeing Paul, while he was a prisoner, employed himself in such prayers to God in behalf of the Ephesians, we should learn that no particular sufferings of our own should make us so solicitous about ourselves, as to neglect the cases of others in our supplications and addresses to God.

He speaks again of his sufferings. *Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory, ver. 13*. While he was in prison he suffered much there; and though it was upon their account that he suffered, yet he would not have them discouraged nor dismayed at this, seeing God had done such great things for them by his ministry. What a tender concern was here for these Ephesians? The apostle seems to have been more solicitous lest they should be discouraged and faint, upon his tribulations, than about what he himself endured: And to prevent this, he tells them, that his sufferings were their glory: And would be so far from being a real discouragement, if they duly considered the matter, that they ministered cause to them for glorying and for rejoicing; as this discovered the great esteem and regard which God bore to them, in that he not only sent his apostles to preach the gospel to them, but even to suffer for them, and to confirm the truths they delivered, by the persecutions they underwent. Observe, *Not only the faithful ministers of Christ themselves, but their people too, have some special cause for joy and glorying, when they suffer for the sake of dispensing the gospel*.

2. The apostle informs them of God's appointing him to the office; and eminently fitting and qualifying him for it, by a special revelation that he made unto him.

God appointed him to the office. *If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward, ver. 2*. They could not but have heard of this, and therefore he does not design to speak doubtfully of this matter. *Eἰς*, is sometimes an affirmative particle, and we may read it, *since you have heard, &c.* He styles the gospel *the grace of God* here, (as

in other places) because it is the gift of divine grace to sinful men; and all the gracious overtures that it makes, and the joyful tidings that it contains, proceed from the rich grace God: And it is the great instrument in the hands of the Spirit, by which God works grace in the souls of men. He speaks of the dispensation of this grace given to him: He means as he was authorized and commissioned by God to dispense the doctrine of the gospel; which commission and authority were given to him, chiefly for the service of the Gentiles, to you-ward. And again, speaking of the gospel, he says, *Whereof I was made a minister, &c.* ver. 7. Here he again asserts his authority. He was *MAD*E a minister, he did not make himself such. He took not to himself that honour. And he was made such according to the gift of the grace of God unto him. God did supply and furnish him for his work; and in the discharge of it did suitably assist and help him with all needful gifts and graces, both ordinary and extraordinary, and that by the effectual working of his power; in himself more especially; and also in great numbers of those to whom he preached; by which means his labours amongst them were successful. Observe, That what God calls men to, he fits them for; and doth it with an almighty power. There is an effectual working of divine power attending the gifts of divine grace.

As God appointed him to the office, so he did eminently qualify him for it, by a special revelation that he made unto him: And he makes mention both of the mystery that was revealed; and of the revelation of it.

The mystery revealed is, that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ, by the gospel, ver. 6. i. e. that they should be joint heirs with the believing Jews of the heavenly inheritance; and that they should be members of the same mystical body, i. e. be received into the church of Christ, and be interested in the gospel-promises as well as the Jews; and particularly in that great promise of the Spirit. And this in Christ, i. e. being united to Christ, in whom all the promises are yea and Amen: And by the gospel, i. e. in the times of the gospel, as some understand it: Or, by the gospel preached to them; which is the great instrument and means by which God works faith in Christ, as others. This was the great truth revealed to the apostle, viz. That God would call the Gentiles to salvation by faith in Christ, and that without the works of the law.

Of the revelation of this truth, he speaks ver. 3, 4, 5. Where we may observe that the coalition of Jews and Gentiles in the gospel-church was a mystery, a great mystery; what was designed in the counsel of God before all worlds, but what could not be fully understood for many ages, till the accomplishment expounded the prophecies of it. It is called a mystery, because the several circumstances and peculiarities of it (such as the time and manner, and means by which it should be effected) were concealed and kept secret in God's own breast, till by an immediate revelation he made them known to his servant. See Acts xxvi. 16, 17, 18. And it is called the mystery of Christ, because it was revealed by him, Gal. i. 12. and because it relates so very much unto him. Of this the apostle had given some hints afore, or a little before; i. e. in the preceding chapters. Whereby when ye read; or, as those words may be read, *Unto which attending*: and it is not enough for us barely to read the scriptures, unless we attend unto them; and seriously consider and lay to heart what we read. Ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ, so as to perceive how God had fitted and qualified him to be an apostle to the Gentiles, which might be to them an evident token of his divine authority. This mystery, he says, in other ages, was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit, ver. 5. that is, it was not so fully and clearly discovered in the ages before Christ, as it is now revealed unto the prophets, i. e. of that age, the prophets of the New Testament; who were immediately inspired and taught by the Spirit. Let us observe that the conversion of the Gentile world to the faith of Christ was an adorable mystery, and we ought to bless God for it. Who would have imagined that those who had been so long in the dark, and at so great a distance, should be enlightened with the marvellous light, and be made nigh? Let us learn from hence not to despair of the worst; of the worst of persons, and of the worst of nations. Nothing is too hard for divine grace to do: None so unworthy but God may please to confer great grace upon them. And how much are we ourselves interested in this affair; not only as we live in a time in which this mystery is revealed, but particularly as we are a part of the nations which in times past were foreigners and strangers, and lived in gross idolatry; but are now enlightened with the everlasting gospel, and partake of the promises of it?

3. The apostle acquaints them how he was employed in this office, and that with respect to the Gentiles, and to all men. (1.) With respect to the Gentiles, he preached to them the unsearchable riches of Christ, ver. 8. Observe in this verse how humbly he speaks of himself; and how highly he speaks of Jesus Christ. (1.) How humbly he speaks of himself: *I am less than the least of all saints.* St. Paul, who was the chief of the apostles, calls himself less than the least of all saints; he means on the account of his having been formerly a persecutor of the followers of Christ. He was, in his own esteem, as little as could be.

What can be less than the least? To speak himself as little as could be, he speaks himself less than could be. Observe, Those whom God advances to honourable employments, he humbles and makes low in their own eyes. And, where God gives grace to be humble, there he gives all other grace. You may also observe in what a different manner the apostle speaks of himself, and of his office. While he magnifies that, he debases himself. Observe, A faithful minister of Christ may be very humble, and think very meanly of himself, even when he thinks and speaks very highly and honourably of his sacred function. (2.) How highly he speaks of Jesus Christ: The unsearchable riches of Christ. There is a mighty treasury of mercy, grace and love laid up in Christ Jesus, and that for Jews and Gentiles both. Or, the riches of the gospel are here spoken of as the riches of Christ: The riches which Christ purchased for, and bestows upon, all believers: And they are unsearchable riches, which we cannot find the bottom of; and which human sagacity could never have discovered; and men could no otherways attain to the knowledge of them but by revelation. Now it was the apostle's business and employment to preach these unsearchable riches of Christ among the Gentiles; and it was a favour he greatly valued, and looked upon it as an unspeakable honour to to him. Unto me is this grace given; this special favour God hath granted to such an unworthy creature as I am. And it is an unspeakable favour to the Gentile world, that to them the unsearchable riches of Christ are preached. Though many remain poor, and are not enriched with these riches; yet it is a favour to have them preached among us, to have an offer of them made to us; and if we be not enriched with them, it is long of our selves. (2.) With respect to all men, ver. 9. His business and employment was to make all men see, i. e. to publish and make known to the whole world, what is the fellowship of the mystery, i. e. that the Gentiles who have hitherto been strangers to the church, shall be admitted into communion with it: Which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God; kept secret in his purpose; who created all things by Jesus Christ: as John i. 3. All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made; and therefore no wonder that he saves the Gentiles as well as the Jews; for he is the common creator of them both: And we may conclude, that he is able to perform the work of their redemption, seeing he was able to accomplish the great work of creation. It is true, that both the first creation, when God made all things out of nothing, and the new creation, whereby sinners are made new creatures by converting grace, are of God by Jesus Christ. The apostle adds, To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known, by the church, the manifold wisdom of God, ver. 10. This was one thing, among others, which God had in his eye, in revealing this mystery, that the good angels, who have a pre-eminence in governing the kingdoms and principalities of the world, and who are endued with great power to execute the will of God on this earth (though their ordinary residence and place of abode is in heaven) may be informed, from what passes in the church, and is done in and by it, of the manifold wisdom of God, i. e. of the great variety with which God wisely dispenses things; or, of his wisdom manifested in the many ways and methods he takes in ordering his church, in the several ages of it, and especially in receiving the Gentiles into it. The holy angels who look into the mystery of our redemption by Christ, could not but take notice of this branch of that mystery, that among the Gentiles is preached the unsearchable riches of Christ. And this is according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord, ver. 11. Some read the words, [καὶ ἡ πρόθεσις τῆ αἰώνου] thus, according to the fore-disposing of the ages which he made, &c. So Dr. Whitby, &c. In the first of the ages (says the mentioned author) his wisdom seeing fit to give the promise of a Saviour to a fallen Adam: In the second age to typify and represent him to the Jews in sacred persons, rites, and sacrifices: And in the age of the Messiah, or the last age to reveal him to the Jews, and preach him to the Gentiles. Others understand it, according to our translation, of the eternal purpose which God purposed to execute in and through Jesus Christ: The whole of what he has done in the great affair of man's redemption, being in pursuance of his eternal decree about that matter. The apostle having mentioned our Lord Jesus Christ, subjoins concerning him, In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him, ver. 12. i. e. By, or through, whom we have liberty to open our minds freely to God, as to a father, and a well-grounded persuasion of audience and of acceptance with him; and this by means of the faith we have in him as our great Mediator and Advocate. We may come with humble boldness to hear from God, knowing that the terror of the curse is done away; and we may expect to hear from him good words and comfortable. We may have access with confidence to speak to God, knowing that we have such a mediator between God and us, and such an advocate with the Father †.

14. For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15. Of whom the whole

† See upon ver. 13. above.

family in heaven and earth is named, 16. That he would grant you according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; 17. That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye being rooted and grounded in love, 18. May be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; 19. And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. 20. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, 21. Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

We are now come to the second part of this chapter, which contains St. Paul's devout and affectionate prayer to God for his beloved Ephesians.

For this cause. This may be referred either to the immediately foregoing verse, *That ye faint not*, &c. Or, rather the apostle is here resuming what he begun at the first verse, from which he digressed in those which are interposed. Observe to whom he prays, to God, as *the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*, of which see chap. i. 3. Observe further, his outward posture in prayer, which was humble and reverent. *I bow my knees.* Note, *When we draw nigh to God, we should reverence him in our hearts; and express it in the most suitable and becoming behaviour and gesture.* And here having mentioned Christ, he cannot pass without an honourable encomium of his love, ver. 15. The universal church hath a dependence upon the Lord Jesus Christ. *Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.* The Jews were wont to boast of Abraham as their father; but now Jews and Gentiles both are denominated from Christ; so some: While others understand it of the saints in heaven, who wear the crown of glory, and of saints on earth, who are going on in the work of grace here: Both the one and the other make but one family, one household; and from him they are named CHRISTIANS, as they really are such; acknowledging their dependence upon, and their relation to, Christ.

Observe what the apostle asks of God for these his friends. Spiritual blessings; which are the best blessings, and the most earnestly to be sought and prayed for, by every one of us, both for ourselves and for our friends.

1. *Spiritual strength* for the work and duty to which we are called, and in which we are employed. *That he would grant you according to the riches of his grace to be strengthened*, &c. *The inner man* is the heart or soul. To be *strengthened with might*, is to be mightily strengthened, much more than they were at present; to be endued with an high degree of grace, and spiritual abilities for the discharging duty, the resisting temptations, the enduring persecutions, &c. And the apostle prays that this may be, *according to the riches of his glory*, or according to his glorious riches, i. e. answerable to that great abundance of grace, mercy, and power, &c. which resides in God, and is *his glory*: And this *by his Spirit*, who is the immediate worker of grace in the souls of God's people. Observe from these things, that *strength from the Spirit of God in the inner man is the best and most desirable strength*; strength in the soul; the strength of faith and other graces; strength to serve God and to do our duty, and to persevere in our Christian course with vigour and with cheerfulness. And let us further observe, that *as the work of grace is first begun, so it is continued and carried on by the blessed Spirit of God*.

2. The indwelling of Christ in our hearts, ver. 17. Christ is said to dwell in his people, as he is always present with them by his gracious influences and operations. Observe, *That it is a desirable thing to have Christ dwell in our hearts*: And if the law of Christ be written there, and the love of Christ be shed abroad there, then Christ dwells there. *Christ is an inhabitant in the soul of every good Christian*. Where his Spirit dwells, there he dwells, and he dwells in the heart *by faith*; by means of the continual exercise of faith upon him. Faith opens the door of the soul to receive Christ; faith admits him, and submits to him. By faith we are united to Christ, and have an interest in him.

3. The fixing of pious and devout affections in the soul. *That ye being rooted and grounded in love*, i. e. steadfastly fixed in your love to God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; and to all the saints the beloved of our Lord Jesus Christ. Many have some love to God, and to his servants, but it is a flash, like the crackling of thorns under a pot, it makes a great noise, but is gone presently. We should earnestly desire that good affections may be fixed in us; that we may be *rooted and grounded in love*. Some understand it of their being settled and established in the sense of God's love to them; which would inspire them with greater ardors of holy love to him, and to one another. And how very desirable is it to have a settled fixed sense of the love of God and Christ to our souls; so as to be able to say with the apostle, at all times, *He has loved me*? Now the best way to attain to this, is

to be careful that we maintain a constant love to God in our souls; this will be the evidence of the love of God to us. *We love him, because he first loved us.* In order to this he prays,

4. For their experimental acquaintance with the love of Jesus Christ. The more intimate acquaintance we have with Christ's love to us, the more our love will be drawn out to him, and to those who are his, for his sake. *That you may be able to comprehend with all saints*, &c. ver. 18, 19. i. e. more clearly to understand, and firmly to believe, the wonderful love of Christ to his, which the saints do understand and believe in some measure, and shall understand more hereafter. *Christians should not aim to comprehend above all saints*; but be content that God deals with them, as he uses to do with those who love and fear his name: We should desire to comprehend *with all saints*, i. e. to have so much knowledge as the saints are allowed to have in this world. We should be ambitious of coming up with *the first three*; but not of going beyond what is the measure of the stature of other saints.

It is observable how magnificently the apostle speaks of the love of Christ. The dimensions of redeeming love are admirable. *The breadth, and length, and depth, and height.* By enumerating these dimensions, the apostle designs to signify the exceeding greatness of the love of Christ; the unsearchable riches of his love, which is *higher than heaven, deeper than hell, longer than the earth, and broader than the sea*, to allude to Job xi. 7, 8. Some describe the particulars thus: By *the breadth* of it, we may understand the extent of it to all ages, nations, and ranks of men. By *the length* of it, its continuance from everlasting to everlasting. By *the depth* of it, its stooping to the lowest condition, with a design to relieve and save those who are sunk into the depths of sin and misery. By its *height*, its entitling, and raising us up to the heavenly happiness and glory. We should desire to *comprehend* this love. It is the character of *all the saints* that they do so: For they all have a complacency and a confidence in the love of Christ. *And to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge*, ver. 19. If it passeth knowledge, how can we know it? Why we must pray and endeavour to know something, and should still covet and strive to know more and more of it, though after the best endeavours none can fully comprehend it: In its full extent it passeth knowledge. Though the love of Christ may be better perceived and known by Christians, than it generally is, yet it cannot be fully understood on this side heaven.

5. He prays that they might *be filled with all the fulness of God*. It is an high expression: We dare not use it, if we did not find it in the scriptures: It is like those other expressions, of being *partakers of a divine nature*; and of being *perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect*. We are not to understand it of his fulness as God in himself; but of his fulness as a God in covenant with us; as a God to his people: Such a fulness as God is ready to bestow, who is willing to fill every one to the utmost of his capacity, and that with all those gifts and graces, which he sees they need. They who receive grace for grace from Christ's fulness, may be said to be filled with the fulness of God, according to their capacity: all which is in order to their arriving to the highest degree of the knowledge and enjoyment of God, and an entire conformity to him.

The apostle closes the chapter with a doxology, ver. 20, 21. *It is proper to conclude our prayers with praises.* Our blessed Saviour hath taught us to do so. Take notice how he describes God; and how he ascribes glory to him. He describes him as a God that *is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think*. There is an inexhaustible fulness of grace and mercy in God, which the prayers of all the saints can never draw dry. Whatever we may ask, or think to ask, still God is able to do more, abundantly more, exceedingly abundantly more. *Open thy mouth never so wide, and he hath wherewithal to fill it.* Note, *In our applications to God we should encourage our faith by a consideration of his all-sufficiency, and almighty power.* According to the power which worketh in us. As if he had said we have already had a proof of this power of God, in what he hath wrought in us, and done for us, having quickened us by his grace, and converted us to himself. *The power that still worketh for the saints is according to that power that hath wrought in them. Wherever God gives of his fulness, he gives to experience his power.*

Having thus described God, he ascribes glory to him. *When we come to ask for grace from God, we ought to give glory to God.* *Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus.* In ascribing glory to God, we ascribe all excellencies and perfections to him, glory being the effulgency and result of them all. Observe, that the seat of God's praises is *in the church*. That little rent of praise which God receives from this world, is from the church; a sacred society constituted for the glory of God: Every particular member of which, both Jew and Gentile, does concur in this work of praising God. *The mediator* of these praises is Jesus Christ. All God's gifts come from him to us through the hand of Christ; and all our praises pass from us to him, through the same hand. And God should and will be praised thus *throughout all ages, world without end*: For he will ever have a church to praise him, and he will ever have his tribute of praise from his church. Amen. So be it! And so it will certainly be.

C H A P. IV.

We have gone through the former part of this epistle ; which consists of several important doctrinal truths, contained in the three preceding chapters. We enter now on the latter part of it, in which we have the most weighty and serious exhortations that can be given. We may observe, that in this (as in most others of St. Paul's epistles) the former part is doctrinal, and fitted to inform the minds of men in the great truths and doctrines of the gospel : The latter is practical, and designed for the direction of their lives and manners : All Christians being obliged to endeavour after soundness in the faith, and regularity in life and practice. In what has gone before, we have heard of Christian privileges, which are the matter of our comfort. In what follows, we shall hear of Christian duties, and what the LORD our God requires of us, in consideration of such privileges vouchsafed to us. The best way to understand the mysteries, and partake of the privileges, of which we have read before, is conscientiously to practise the duties prescribed to us in what follows : As, on the other hand, a serious consideration and belief of the doctrines that have been taught us in the foregoing chapters, will be a good foundation on which to build the practice of the duties prescribed, in those which are yet before us : Christian faith and Christian practice do mutually befriend each other.

In this chapter we have divers exhortations to important duties. (1.) One that is more general, ver. 1. (2.) An exhortation to mutual love, unity, and concord, with the proper means and motives to promote them, ver. 2—16. (3.) An exhortation to Christian purity and holiness of life ; and that both more general, ver. 17—24. and in several particular instances, ver. 25, ad fin.

I Therefore the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,

This is a general exhortation to walk as becomes our Christian profession. St. Paul was now a prisoner at Rome ; and he was the prisoner of the Lord, or in the Lord which signifies as much as for the Lord. See of this, chap. iii. 1. He mentions this once and again, to shew that he was not ashamed of his bonds, well knowing that he suffered not as an evil doer : And likewise to recommend what he wrote to them, with the greater tenderness, and with some special advantage. It was a doctrine he thought worth suffering for, and therefore surely they should think it worthy their serious regards, and their dutiful observance. We have here the petition of a poor prisoner, one of Christ's prisoners. *I therefore the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you, &c.* Considering what God hath done for you, and to what a state and condition he has called you, as has been discoursed before ; I now come with an earnest request to you, (not to send me relief ; or to use your interest for the obtaining my liberty ; the first thing which poor prisoners are wont to solicit from their friends : But) that you would approve yourselves good Christians, and live up to your profession and calling : *That ye walk worthy, &c. i. e.* agreeable, suitable, and congruous to those happy circumstances into which the grace of God hath brought you, whom he hath converted from heathenism to Christianity. Observe, Christians ought to accommodate themselves to the gospel, by which they are called, and to the glory to which they are called ; both are their vocation. We are called Christians, we must answer that name, and live like Christians. We are called to God's kingdom and glory ; that kingdom and glory therefore we must mind, and walk as becomes the heirs of them.

2. With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love ; 3. Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4. *There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling ;* 5. One Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6. One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. 7. But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. 8. Wherefore he faith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. 9. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth ? 10. He that descended, is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things) 11. And he gave some, apostles, and some, prophets : and some, evangelists, and some, pastors and teachers ; 12. For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ : 13. Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the

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measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ : 14. That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the slight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive : 15. But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ : 16. From whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of it self in love.

Here the apostle proceeds to more particular exhortations. Two he enlarges upon in this chapter, viz. To unity and purity, holiness and love, which Christians should very much study. We do not walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called ; if we be not faithful friends to all Christians, and sworn enemies to all sin.

This section contains the exhortation to mutual love, unity, and concord ; with the proper means and motives to promote them. Nothing is pressed upon us more earnestly in the scriptures than this. Love is the law of Christ's kingdom, the lesson of his school, the livery of his family. Observe,

1. The means of unity : *Lowliness and meekness, long-suffering, and forbearing one another in love*, ver. 2. By *lowliness* we are to understand humility, and the entertaining mean thoughts of ourselves, which is opposed to pride. By *meekness*, that excellent disposition of soul, which makes men unwilling to provoke others ; and not easily to be provoked, or offended with their infirmities ; and it is opposed to angry resentments and peevishness. *Long-suffering* implies a patient bearing of injuries without seeking revenge. And *forbearing one another in love*, signifies the bearing their infirmities out of a principle of love ; and so as not to cease to love them on the account of these. *The best Christians have need to bear one with another ; and to make the best one of another ; to provoke one another's graces, and not their passions.* We find much in ourselves, which it is hard to forgive ourselves ; and therefore we must not think it much, if we find that in others, which we think hard to forgive them ; and yet must forgive them as we forgive ourselves. Now, without these things unity cannot be preserved. The first step towards unity is humility ; without that there will be no meekness, no patience, nor forbearance ; and without these no unity. Pride and passion break the peace, and make all the mischief. Humility and meekness, &c. restore the peace and keep it. *Only by pride comes contention : Only by humility comes love.* The more lowly-mindedness, the more like-mindedness. We do not walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called, if we be not meek and lowly of heart : For he by whom we are called ; he, to whom we are called, was eminent for meekness and lowliness of heart, and hath commanded us therein to learn of him.

2. We have an account of the nature of that unity which the apostle prescribes. It is *the unity of the Spirit*, ver. 3. The seat of Christian unity is in the heart, or spirit. It does not lie in one set of thoughts, nor in one form and mode of worship : But in one heart, and one soul. This unity of heart and affection may be said to be of *the Spirit of God* ; it is wrought by him, and is one of the fruits of the Spirit. This we should endeavour to keep. Endeavouring is a gospel-word. We must do our utmost. If others will quarrel with us, we must take all possible care not to quarrel with them. If others will despise and hate us, we must not despise and hate them. *In the bond of peace.* Peace is a bond, as it unites persons, and makes them live friendly one with another. A peaceable disposition and conduct binds Christians together : Whereas discord and quarrel disband and disunite their hearts and affections. Many slender twigs bound together become strong. *The bond of peace* is the strength of society. Not that it can be imagined, that all good people, and all the members of societies, should be in every thing just of the same length, and the same sentiments, and the same judgment : But *the bond of peace* unites them all together, with a *non obstante* to these. As in a bundle of rods, they may be of different lengths, and different strength ; but when they are tied together by one bond, they are much stronger than any, even the thickest and strongest were of themselves.

3. We have next the motives proper to promote this Christian unity and concord. The apostle urges several to persuade us to it.

(1.) Consider how many unities there are, that are the joy and glory of our Christian profession. There should be one heart : For *there is one body, and one Spirit*, ver. 4. Two hearts in one body would be monstrous. If there be but *one body*, all that belong to that body should have one heart. The catholick church is one mystical body of Christ, and all good Christians make up but one body, incorporated by one charter, that of the gospel ; animated by *one Spirit*, the same holy Spirit, who by his gifts and graces, quickens, enlivens, and governs that body. If we belong to Christ, we are all acted by one and the same Spirit, and therefore should be one : *Even as you are called in one hope of your calling.* Hope is here put for its object, the thing hoped for,

family in heaven and earth is named, 16. That he would grant you according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; 17. That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye being rooted and grounded in love, 18. May be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; 19. And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. 20. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, 21. Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

We are now come to the second part of this chapter, which contains St. Paul's devout and affectionate prayer to God for his beloved Ephesians.

For this cause. This may be referred either to the immediately foregoing verse, *That ye faint not*, &c. Or, rather the apostle is here resuming what he begun at the first verse, from which he digressed in those which are interposed. Observe to whom he prays, to God, as *the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*, of which see chap. i. 3. Observe further, his *outward posture* in prayer, which was humble and reverent. *I bow my knees.* Note, *When we draw nigh to God, we should reverence him in our hearts; and express it in the most suitable and becoming behaviour and gesture.* And here having mentioned Christ, he cannot pass without an honourable encomium of his love, ver. 15. The universal church hath a dependence upon the Lord Jesus Christ. *Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.* The Jews were wont to boast of Abraham as their father; but now Jews and Gentiles both are denominated from Christ; so some: While others understand it of the saints in heaven, who wear the crown of glory, and of saints on earth, who are going on in the work of grace here: Both the one and the other make but one family, one household; and from him they are named CHRISTIANS, as they really are such; acknowledging their dependence upon, and their relation to, Christ.

Observe what the apostle asks of God for these his friends. Spiritual blessings; which are the best blessings, and the most earnestly to be sought and prayed for, by every one of us, both for ourselves and for our friends.

1. *Spiritual strength* for the work and duty to which we are called, and in which we are employed. *That he would grant you according to the riches of his grace to be strengthened*, &c. *The inner man* is the heart or soul. To be *strengthened with might*, is to be mightily strengthened, much more than they were at present; to be endued with an high degree of grace, and spiritual abilities for the discharging duty, the resisting temptations, the enduring persecutions, &c. And the apostle prays that this may be, *according to the riches of his glory*, or according to his glorious riches, i. e. answerable to that great abundance of grace, mercy, and power, &c. which resides in God, and is *his glory*: And this *by his Spirit*, who is the immediate worker of grace in the souls of God's people. Observe from these things, that *strength from the Spirit of God in the inner man is the best and most desirable strength*; strength in the soul; the strength of faith and other graces; strength to serve God and to do our duty, and to persevere in our Christian course with vigour and with cheerfulness. And let us further observe, that *as the work of grace is first begun, so it is continued and carried on by the blessed Spirit of God*.

2. The indwelling of Christ in our hearts, ver. 17. Christ is said to dwell in his people, as he is always present with them by his gracious influences and operations. Observe, *That it is a desirable thing to have Christ dwell in our hearts*: And if the law of Christ be written there, and the love of Christ be shed abroad there, then Christ dwells there. *Christ is an inhabitant in the soul of every good Christian*. Where his Spirit dwells, there he dwells, and he dwells in the heart *by faith*; by means of the continual exercise of faith upon him. Faith opens the door of the soul to receive Christ; faith admits him, and submits to him. By faith we are united to Christ, and have an interest in him.

3. The fixing of pious and devout affections in the soul. *That ye being rooted and grounded in love*, i. e. steadfastly fixed in your love to God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; and to all the saints the beloved of our Lord Jesus Christ. Many have some love to God, and to his servants, but it is a flash, like the crackling of thorns under a pot, it makes a great noise, but is gone presently. We should earnestly desire that good affections may be fixed in us; that we may be *rooted and grounded in love*. Some understand it of their being settled and established in the sense of God's love to them; which would inspire them with greater ardors of holy love to him, and to one another. And how very desirable is it to have a settled fixed sense of the love of God and Christ to our souls; so as to be able to say with the apostle, at all times, *He has loved me*? Now the best way to attain to this, is

to be careful that we maintain a constant love to God in our souls; this will be the evidence of the love of God to us. *We love him, because he first loved us*. In order to this he prays,

4. For their experimental acquaintance with the love of Jesus Christ. The more intimate acquaintance we have with Christ's love to us, the more our love will be drawn out to him, and to those who are his, for his sake. *That you may be able to comprehend with all saints*, &c. ver. 18, 19. i. e. more clearly to understand, and firmly to believe, the wonderful love of Christ to his, which the saints do understand and believe in some measure, and shall understand more hereafter. *Christians should not aim to comprehend above all saints*; but be content that God deals with them, as he uses to do with those who love and fear his name: We should desire to comprehend *with all saints*, i. e. to have so much knowledge as the saints are allowed to have in this world. We should be ambitious of coming up with *the first three*; but not of going beyond what is the measure of the stature of other saints.

It is observable how magnificently the apostle speaks of the love of Christ. The dimensions of redeeming love are admirable. *The breadth, and length, and depth, and height*. By enumerating these dimensions, the apostle designs to signify the exceeding greatness of the love of Christ; the unsearchable riches of his love, which is *higher than heaven, deeper than hell, longer than the earth, and broader than the sea*, to allude to Job xi. 7, 8. Some describe the particulars thus: By *the breadth* of it, we may understand the extent of it to all ages, nations, and ranks of men. By *the length* of it, its continuance from everlasting to everlasting. By *the depth* of it, its stooping to the lowest condition, with a design to relieve and save those who are sunk into the depths of sin and misery. By its *height*, its exalting, and raising us up to the heavenly happiness and glory. We should desire to *comprehend* this love. It is the character of *all the saints* that they do so: For they all have a complacency and a confidence in the love of Christ. *And to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge*, ver. 19. If it passeth knowledge, how can we know it? Why we must pray and endeavour to know something, and should still covet and strive to know more and more of it, though after the best endeavours none can fully comprehend it: In its full extent it passeth knowledge. Though the love of Christ may be better perceived and known by Christians, than it generally is, yet it cannot be fully understood on this side heaven.

5. He prays that they might *be filled with all the fulness of God*. It is an high expression: We dare not use it, if we did not find it in the scriptures: It is like those other expressions, of being *partakers of a divine nature*; and of being *perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect*. We are not to understand it of his fulness as God in himself; but of his fulness as a God in covenant with us; as a God to his people: Such a fulness as God is ready to bestow, who is willing to fill every one to the utmost of his capacity, and that with all those gifts and graces, which he sees they need. They who receive grace for grace from Christ's fulness, may be said to be filled with the fulness of God, according to their capacity: all which is in order to their arriving to the highest degree of the knowledge and enjoyment of God, and an entire conformity to him.

The apostle closes the chapter with a doxology, ver. 20, 21. *It is proper to conclude our prayers with praises*. Our blessed Saviour hath taught us to do so. Take notice how he describes God; and how he ascribes glory to him. He describes him as a God that *is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think*. There is an inexhaustible fulness of grace and mercy in God, which the prayers of all the saints can never draw dry. Whatever we may ask, or think to ask, still God is able to do more, abundantly more, exceedingly abundantly more. *Open thy mouth never so wide*, and he hath wherewithal to fill it. Note, *In our applications to God we should encourage our faith by a consideration of his all-sufficiency, and almighty power*. According to the power which worketh in us. As if he had said we have already had a proof of this power of God, in what he hath wrought in us, and done for us, having quickened us by his grace, and converted us to himself. *The power that still worketh for the saints is according to that power that hath wrought in them. Wherever God gives of his fulness, he gives to experience his power*.

Having thus described God, he ascribes glory to him. *When we come to ask for grace from God, we ought to give glory to God. Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus*. In ascribing glory to God, we ascribe all excellencies and perfections to him, glory being the effulgency and result of them all. Observe, that the seat of God's praises is *in the church*. That little rent of praise which God receives from this world, is from the church; a sacred society constituted for the glory of God: Every particular member of which, both Jew and Gentile, does concur in this work of praising God. *The mediator* of these praises is Jesus Christ. All God's gifts come from him to us through the hand of Christ; and all our praises pass from us to him, through the same hand. And God should and will be praised thus *throughout all ages, world without end*: For he will ever have a church to praise him, and he will ever have his tribute of praise from his church. Amen. So be it! And so it will certainly be.

C H A P. IV.

We have gone through the former part of this epistle ; which consists of several important doctrinal truths, contained in the three preceding chapters. We enter now on the latter part of it, in which we have the most weighty and serious exhortations that can be given. We may observe, that in this (as in most others of St. Paul's epistles) the former part is doctrinal, and fitted to inform the minds of men in the great truths and doctrines of the gospel : The latter is practical, and designed for the direction of their lives and manners : All Christians being obliged to endeavour after soundness in the faith, and regularity in life and practice. In what has gone before, we have heard of Christian privileges, which are the matter of our comfort. In what follows, we shall hear of Christian duties, and what the LORD our God requires of us, in consideration of such privileges vouchsafed to us. The best way to understand the mysteries, and partake of the privileges, of which we have read before, is conscientiously to practise the duties prescribed to us in what follows : As, on the other hand, a serious consideration and belief of the doctrines that have been taught us in the foregoing chapters, will be a good foundation on which to build the practice of the duties prescribed, in those which are yet before us : Christian faith and Christian practice do mutually befriend each other.

In this chapter we have divers exhortations to important duties. (1.) One that is more general, ver. 1. (2.) An exhortation to mutual love, unity, and concord, with the proper means and motives to promote them, ver. 2—16. (3.) An exhortation to Christian purity and holiness of life ; and that both more general, ver. 17—24. and in several particular instances, ver. 25, ad fin.

I Therefore the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,

This is a general exhortation to walk as becomes our Christian profession. St. Paul was now a prisoner at Rome ; and he was the prisoner of the Lord, or in the Lord which signifies as much as for the Lord. See of this, chap. iii. 1. He mentions this once and again, to shew that he was not ashamed of his bonds, well knowing that he suffered not as an evil doer : And likewise to recommend what he wrote to them, with the greater tenderness, and with some special advantage. It was a doctrine he thought worth suffering for, and therefore surely they should think it worthy their serious regards, and their dutiful observance. We have here the petition of a poor prisoner, one of Christ's prisoners. *I therefore the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you, &c.* Considering what God hath done for you, and to what a state and condition he has called you, as has been discoursed before ; I now come with an earnest request to you, (not to send me relief ; or to use your interest for the obtaining my liberty ; the first thing which poor prisoners are wont to solicit from their friends : But) that you would approve yourselves good Christians, and live up to your profession and calling : *That ye walk worthy, &c. i. e.* agreeable, suitable, and congruous to those happy circumstances into which the grace of God hath brought you, whom he hath converted from heathenism to Christianity. Observe, Christians ought to accommodate themselves to the gospel, by which they are called, and to the glory to which they are called ; both are their vocation. We are called Christians, we must answer that name, and live like Christians. We are called to God's kingdom and glory ; that kingdom and glory therefore we must mind, and walk as becomes the heirs of them.

2. With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love ; 3. Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4. *There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling ;* 5. One Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6. One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. 7. But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. 8. Wherefore he faith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. 9. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth ? 10. He that descended, is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things) 11. And he gave some, apostles, and some, prophets : and some, evangelists, and some, pastors and teachers ; 12. For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ : 13. Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the

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measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ : 14. That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the slight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive : 15. But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ : 16. From whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of it self in love.

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2. We have an account of the nature of that unity which the apostle prescribes. It is *the unity of the Spirit*, ver. 3. The seat of Christian unity is in the heart, or spirit. It does not lie in one set of thoughts, nor in one form and mode of worship : But in one heart, and one soul. This unity of heart and affection may be said to be of the Spirit of God ; it is wrought by him, and is one of the fruits of the Spirit. This we should endeavour to keep. Endeavouring is a gospel-word. We must do our utmost. If others will quarrel with us, we must take all possible care not to quarrel with them. If others will despise and hate us, we must not despise and hate them. *In the bond of peace.* Peace is a bond, as it unites persons, and makes them live friendly one with another. A peaceable disposition and conduct binds Christians together : Whereas discord and quarrel disband and disunite their hearts and affections. Many slender twigs bound together become strong. *The bond of peace* is the strength of society. Not that it can be imagined, that all good people, and all the members of societies, should be in every thing just of the same length, and the same sentiments, and the same judgment : But the bond of peace unites them all together, with a non obstante to these. As in a bundle of rods, they may be of different lengths, and different strength ; but when they are tied together by one bond, they are much stronger than any, even the thickest and strongest were of themselves.

3. We have next the motives proper to promote this Christian unity and concord. The apostle urges several to persuade us to it.

(1.) Consider how many unities there are, that are the joy and glory of our Christian profession. There should be one heart : For *there is one body, and one Spirit*, ver. 4. Two hearts in one body would be monstrous. If there be but one body, all that belong to that body should have one heart. The catholick church is one mystical body of Christ, and all good Christians make up but one body, incorporated by one charter, that of the gospel ; animated by one Spirit, the same holy Spirit, who by his gifts and graces, quickens, enlivens, and governs that body. If we belong to Christ, we are all acted by one and the same Spirit, and therefore should be one : *Even as you are called in one hope of your calling.* Hope is here put for its object, the thing hoped for,

for, the heavenly inheritance; to the hope of which we are called: All Christians are called to the same hope of eternal life. There is one Christ that they all hope in, and one heaven, that they are all hoping for; and therefore they should be of one heart. *One Lord*, ver. 5. i. e. Christ, the head of the church, to whom, by God's appointment, all Christians are immediately subject. *One faith*, that is the gospel, containing the doctrine of the Christian faith: or, it is the same grace of faith, (viz. faith in Christ) whereby all Christians are saved. *One baptism*, by which we profess our faith; being baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and so the same sacramental covenant, whereby we engage ourselves to the Lord Christ. *One God and Father of all*, ver. 6. *One God*, who owns all the true members of the church for his children; for he is *the Father* of all such by special relation; as he is *the Father of all men* by creation: And he is *above all*, by his essence, and with respect to the glorious perfections of his nature; and as he has dominion over all creatures, and especially over his church. *And through all*; by his providence upholding and governing them. *And in you all*; in all believers, in whom he dwells; as in his holy temple, by his Spirit and special grace.

If then there be so many *ones*, it is pity but there should be one more; one heart, or one soul.

(2.) Consider the variety of gifts that Christ has bestowed among Christians. *But unto every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ*. Though the members of Christ's church agree in so many things; yet there are some things wherein they differ: But this should breed no difference of affection among them; since they are all derived from the same bountiful author, and designed for the same great ends. *Unto every one of us Christians is given grace*, some gift of grace, in some kind or degree or other, for the mutual help of one another. *Unto every one of us ministers is given grace*; to some a greater measure of gifts to others a lesser measure. The different gifts of Christ's ministers proved a great occasion of contention among the first Christians. *One was for Paul, and another for Apollos*. The apostle shews, that they had no reason to quarrel about them; but all the reason in the world to agree in the joint use of them, for common edification; because all was given *according to the measure of the gift of Christ*, in such a measure as seemed best to Christ to bestow upon every one. Observe, *All the ministers, and all the members of Christ, owe all the gifts and graces that they are possessed of to him*: And this is a good reason why we should love one another, *because to every one of us is given grace. All to whom Christ hath given grace, and on whom he hath bestowed his gifts* (though they are of different sizes, different names, and different sentiments, yet) *ought to love one another*.

The apostle takes this occasion to instance in some of the gifts which Christ bestowed. And that they were bestowed by Christ, he makes appear by those words of David, wherein he foretold this concerning him, *Psal. lxxviii. 18. Wherefore he saith*, ver. 8. i. e. the Psalmist saith, *When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men*. David prophesied of the ascension of Christ; and the apostle descants upon it here, and in the three following verses. *When he ascended up on high*. We may understand the apostle both of *the place*, into which he ascended in his human nature, that is the highest heavens; and particularly of *the state*, to which he was advanced, he being then highly exalted, and eminently glorified by his Father. Let us set ourselves to think of the ascension of Jesus Christ: That our blessed Redeemer being risen from the dead, is gone to heaven, where he sits at the right hand of the Majesty on high, which compleated the proof of his being the Son of God. As great conquerors, when they rode in their triumphant chariots, used to be attended with the most illustrious of their captives led in chains, and were wont to scatter their largesses and bounty among the soldiers, and other spectators of their triumphs: So Christ, when he ascended into heaven, as a triumphant conqueror, *led captivity captive*. It is a phrase used in the Old Testament, to signify a conquest over enemies, especially over such as formerly had led others captive; see *Judg. v. 12. Captivity* is here put for captives, and signifies all our spiritual enemies, who brought us into captivity before. He conquered those who had conquered us, such as sin, the devil, and death. Indeed, he triumphed over these *on the cross*; but the triumph was completed at his ascension, when he became Lord over all, and had the keys of death and *hades* put into his hands. *And he gave gifts unto men*; in the psalm it is, *he received gifts for men*. He received for them, that he might give to them, a large measure of gifts and graces; particularly, he enriched his disciples with the gift of the Holy Ghost. The apostle thus speaking of the ascension of Christ, takes notice, that he *descended first*, ver. 9. As much as if he had said, when David speaks of Christ's *ascension*, he intimates the knowledge he had of Christ's humiliation on earth: For when it is said, that he *ascended*, this implies that he first *descended*: For *what is it*, but a proof or demonstration of his having done so? *Into the lower parts of the earth*; this may refer either to his *incarnation*, according to that of David, *Psal. cxxxix. 15. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth*: Or, to his *burial*,

according to that of *Psal. lxxiii. 9. They that seek my soul to destroy it, shall go into the lower parts of the earth*. He calls his death (say some of the fathers) his descent into the lower parts of the earth. He descended *TO* the earth in his incarnation. He descended *INTO* the earth in his burial: *As Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so was the Son of man in the heart of the earth*. He that descended, is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, ver. 10. i. e. far above the airy and starry (which are the visible) heavens, into the heaven of heavens; *that he might fill all things*, i. e. all the members of his church with gifts and graces suitable to their several conditions and stations. Observe, *our Lord humbled himself first, and then he was exalted*. He descended first, and then ascended.

The apostle next tells us, what were Christ's gifts at his ascension: *He gave some, apostles, &c. ver. 11*. Indeed he sent forth some of these before his ascension, *Matt. x. 1, 2, 5*. But some were then added, *Acts i. 26*. And all of them were more solemnly installed, and publickly confirmed in their office, by his visible pouring forth the Holy Ghost in an extraordinary manner and measure upon them. Note, *That the great gift that Christ gave to the church at his ascension, was that of the ministry of peace and reconciliation*. The gift of the ministry is the fruit of Christ's ascension. And ministers have their various gifts, which are all given them by the Lord Jesus.

The officers which Christ gave to his church were of two sorts; extraordinary ones advanced to an higher office in the church: Such were *apostles, prophets, and evangelists*. The *apostles* were chief. These Christ immediately called, furnished them with extraordinary gifts, and the power of working miracles, and with infallibility in delivering his truths: And they having been the witnesses of his miracles and doctrine, he sent them forth to spread the gospel, and to plant and govern churches. The *prophets* seem to have been such as expounded the writings of the Old Testament, and foretold things to come. The *evangelists* were ordained persons, *2 Tim. i. 6*. whom the apostles took for their companions in travel, *Gal. ii. 1*. and sent them out to settle and establish such churches as the apostles themselves had planted, *Acts xix. 22*. and not being fixed to any particular place, they were to continue till recalled, *2 Tim. iv. 9*.

And then there are *ordinary* ministers employed in a lower and narrower sphere; as *pastors and teachers*. Some take these two names to signify one office, implying the duties of ruling and teaching belonging to it: Others think they design two distinct offices, both ordinary, and of standing use in the church; and then *pastors* are such as are fixed at the head of particular churches, with a design to guide, instruct, and feed them in the manner appointed by Christ; and they are frequently called *bishops and elders*. And the *teachers* were such, whose work it was also to preach the gospel, and to instruct the people by way of exhortation. We see here, that *it is Christ's prerogative to appoint what officers and offices he pleases in his church*. And how rich is the church, that had at first such a variety of officers, and hath still such a variety of gifts? How kind is Christ to his church? How careful of it, and of its edification? When he ascended, he procured the gift of the Holy Ghost: And the gifts of the Holy Ghost are various; some have greater; others have lesser measures: But all for the good of the body. Which brings to the third argument,

(3.) Which is taken from Christ's great end and design in giving gifts unto men. The gifts of Christ were intended for the good of his church, and in order to advance his kingdom and interest among men. All these being designed for one common end, is a good reason why all Christians should agree in brotherly love; and not envy one another's gifts. All are *for the perfecting of the saints*, ver. 12. i. e. according to the import of the original, to bring them into an orderly, spiritual state and frame, who had been as it were dislocated and disjointed by sin; and then to strengthen, confirm, and advance them therein: That so each, in his proper place and function, might contribute to the good of the whole. *For the work of the ministry*; or, *for the work of dispensation*, i. e. that they might *dispense* the doctrines of the gospel, and successfully discharge the several parts of their ministerial function. *For the edifying of the body of Christ*, i. e. to build up the church, which is Christ's mystical body, by increase of their graces, and an addition of new members. All are designed to prepare us for heaven. *Till we all come, &c. ver. 13*. The gifts and offices (some of them) which have been spoken of, are to continue in the church till the saints be perfected, which will not be *till they all come in the unity of the faith*, i. e. till all true believers meet together, by means of the same precious faith; *and of the knowledge of the Son of God*: by which we are to understand, not a bare speculative knowledge, or acknowledging of Christ to be the Son of God, and the great mediator; but such as is attended with approbation and affection, with all due honour, trust, and obedience. *Unto a perfect man*, to our full growth of gifts and graces, free from those *childish* infirmities, that we are subject to in the present world. *Unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ*, i. e. so as to be Christians of a full maturity and ripeness in all the graces derived from Christ's fulness: Or, according to the measure of that stature, which is to make up the fulness of Christ; which

is to complete his mystical body. Now, we shall never come to the perfect man, till we come to the perfect world. There is a *fulness* in Christ, and a *fulness* to be derived from him; and a certain *stature* of that fulness, and a *measure* of that stature, assigned in the counsel of God to every believer; and we never come to that measure till we come to heaven. God's children, as long as they are in this world, are in growing.

Dr. Lightfoot understands the apostle as speaking here of Jews and Gentiles knit in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God; so making a perfect man, and the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

The apostle further shews in the following verses, what was God's design in his sacred institutions, and what effect they ought to have upon us. As,

(1.) *That we henceforth be no more children, &c. ver. 14. i. e.* That we may be no longer children in knowledge, weak in the faith, and inconstant in our judgments; easily yielding to every temptation, readily complying with every one's humour, and being at every one's beck. Children are easily imposed upon; we must take care of that; and of being *tossed to and fro*, like ships without ballast; and *carried about*, like clouds in the air, with such *doctrines* as have no truth nor *solidity* in them, but nevertheless *spread themselves far and wide*; and are therefore compared to *wind*. By the *sight of men*; it is a metaphor taken from gamesters, and signifies the mischievous subtilty of seducers; and *cunning craftiness*, by which is meant their skilfulness in finding out ways to seduce and deceive: for it follows, *whereby they lie in wait to deceive*, as in an ambush, in order to circumvent the weak, and draw them from the truth. Note, *They must be very wicked and ungodly men, who set themselves to seduce and deceive others into false doctrines and errors*: The apostle describes them here as base men, using a great deal of devilish art and cunning, in order thereunto. And the best method we can take to fortify ourselves against such, is to study the sacred oracles, and to pray for the illumination and grace of the Spirit of Christ, that we may know the truth as it is in Jesus, and be established in it.

(2.) That we should *speak the truth in love*, ver. 15. or, follow the truth in love; or, be sincere in love, *i. e.* to our fellow-Christians. While we adhere to the doctrine of Christ, which is the truth, we should live in love one with another. *Love is an excellent thing; but we must be careful to preserve truth together with it. Truth is an excellent thing; yet it is requisite that we speak it in love, and not in contention.* These two should go together, truth and peace.

(3.) That we should *grow up into Christ in all things. Into Christ*, so as to be more deeply rooted in him. *In all things*: In knowledge, love, faith, and all the parts of the new man. We should *grow up* towards maturity; which is opposed to the being *children*. *Those are improving Christians, who grow up into Christ*. The more we grow in an acquaintance with Christ, faith in him, love to him, dependence upon him; the more we shall flourish in every grace. *He is the head*, and we should thus grow, that we may thereby honour our head. *The Christian's growth tends to the glory of Christ*.

(4.) We should be assisting and helpful one to another, as members of the same body, ver. 16. Where the apostle makes a comparison betwixt the natural body, and Christ's mystical body, that body of which Christ is the head: And he observes, that as there must be communion and mutual communications of the members of the body among themselves, in order to their growth and improvement, so there must be mutual love and unity, together with the proper fruits of these, among Christians, in order to their spiritual improvement, and growth in grace. *From whom*, says he, *i. e.* from Christ their head, who conveys influence and nourishment to every particular member, *the whole body of Christians fitly joined together and compacted*, *i. e.* being orderly and firmly united among themselves, every one in his proper place and station, *by that which every joint supplieth*, by the assistance which every of the parts thus united, gives to the whole: Or, by the Spirit, faith, love, sacraments, &c. which (like the veins and arteries in the body) serve to unite Christians to Christ their head, and to one another, as fellow-members. *According to the effectual working in the measure of every part*: That is, say some, according to the power which the Holy Ghost exerts to make God's appointed means effectual for this great end; in such a *measure* as Christ judges to be sufficient and proper for every member, according to its respective place and office in the body. Or, as others, according to the power of Christ, who as head influenceth, and enliveneth every member: Or, according to the effectual working of every member, in communicating to others of what it hath received, nourishment is conveyed to all in their proportions, and according to the state and exigence of every part, *maketh increase of the body*, *i. e.* such an increase as is convenient for the body. Observe, *Particular Christians receive their gifts and graces from Christ for the sake and benefit of the whole body. Unto the edifying of itself in love.* We may understand this two ways. Either, that all the members of the church may attain unto a greater measure of love to Christ, and to one another. Or, that they are moved to act in the manner mentioned, from love to Christ, and to one another. Observe,

that *mutual love among Christians is a great friend to spiritual growth*. It is in love, that the body edifies itself. Whereas, *A kingdom divided against itself cannot stand*.

17. This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk in the vanity of their mind, 18. Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: 19. Who being past feeling, have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. 20. But ye have not so learned Christ; 21. If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: 22. That ye put off concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts: 23. And he renewed in the spirit of your mind; 24. And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. 25. Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another. 26. Be ye angry and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: 27. Neither give place to the devil. 28. Let him that stole, steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. 29. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. 30. And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. 31. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking be put away from you, with all malice. 32. And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

The apostle having gone through his exhortation to mutual love, unity, and concord, in the foregoing verses; there follows in these an exhortation to Christian purity and holiness of heart and life; and that both more *general*, ver. 17—24. and in several *particular instances*, ver. 25—32. This is solemnly introduced. *This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, i. e.* seeing the matter is as above described: Seeing you are members of Christ's body, and partakers of such gifts: This I urge upon your consciences, and bear witness to, as your duty in the Lord's name, and by virtue of the authority I have derived from him. And then, the more *general* exhortation to purity and holiness of heart and life begins thus: *That ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, &c. i. e.* That for the time to come you do not live, and behave yourselves as ignorant and unconverted heathens do, who are wholly guided by an understanding employed about vain things, [their idols, and their worldly possessions] things which are no way profitable to their souls, and which will deceive their expectations. *Converted Gentiles must not live as unconverted Gentiles do*. Though they live *among* them, they must not live *like* them. Here the apostle takes occasion to describe the wickedness of the Gentile world, out of which regenerate Christians were snatched as brands out of the burning.

1. Their *understandings were darkened*, ver. 18. They were void of all saving knowledge; yea, ignorant of many things concerning God, which the light of nature might have taught them. They sat in darkness, and they loved it rather than light. And by their *ignorance* they were *alienated from the life of God*: They were estranged from, and had a dislike and an aversion to a life of holiness, which is not only that way of life which God requires and approves of, and by which we live to him; but which resembles God himself, in his purity, righteousness, truth, and goodness. Their wilful ignorance was the cause of their estrangement from this life of God, which begins in light and knowledge. *Gross and affected ignorance is destructive to religion and godliness*. And what was the cause they were thus ignorant? it was *because of the blindness*, or the hardness of their heart. It was not because God did not make himself known to them by his works; but because they would not admit the instructive rays of the divine light. They were ignorant because they would be so. Their ignorance proceeded from their obstinacy, and *the hardness of their hearts*; they resisting the light, and rejecting all the means of illumination and knowledge.

2. Their consciences were debauched and seared. *Who being past feeling*, ver. 19. They had no sense of their sin, or of the misery and danger of their case, by means of it: whereupon they *gave themselves over unto lasciviousness*. They indulged themselves in their filthy lusts, and yielding themselves up to the dominion of these, they became the slaves and drudges of sin and the devil; *working all uncleanness with greediness*. They made it their com-

mon practice to commit all sorts of uncleanness, and even the most unnatural and monstrous sins, and that with insatiable desires. Observe, *When mens consciences are once seared; there are no bounds to their sins.* When they set their hearts upon the gratification of their lusts, what can be expected but the most abominable sensuality and lewdness; and that their horrid enormities will abound?

This was the character of the Gentiles; but these Christians must distinguish themselves from such Gentiles, *Ye have not so learned Christ*, ver. 20. It may be read, *But ye not so*; ye have learned Christ. *Those who have learned Christ, are saved from that darkness and defilement, which others lie under: and as they know more, they are obliged to live in a better manner than others.* It is a good argument against sin, that we have not so learned Christ. Learn Christ! is Christ a book, a lesson, a way, a trade? The meaning is, ye have not so learned Christianity: the doctrines of Christ, and the rules of life prescribed by him. Not so, as to do as others do. *If so be, or since, that ye have heard him*, ver. 21. i. e. have heard his doctrine preached by us, and have been taught by him, i. e. inwardly and effectually by his Spirit. Christ is the lesson, we must learn Christ: and Christ is the teacher; we are taught by him, *As the truth is in Jesus*. This may be understood two ways; either, (1.) You have been taught the real truth, as held forth by Christ himself, both in his doctrine, and in his life. Or, (2.) Thus, the truth has made such an impression on your hearts, in your measure, as it did upon the heart of Jesus. *The truth of Christ then appears in its beauty and power, when it appears as in Jesus.*

Another branch of the general exhortation follows in those words, *That ye put off concerning the former conversation, the old man, &c.* ver. 22—24. This is a great part of the doctrine which has been taught you, and that you have learned. Here the apostle expresses himself in metaphors taken from garments. The principles, habits, and dispositions of the soul must be changed, before there can be a saving change of the life. There must be sanctification; which consists of these two things.

1. *The old man must be put off.* The corrupt nature is called a man, because, like the human body, it consists of divers parts, mutually supporting and strengthening one another. It is the old man, as old as Adam, from whom we derived it: it is bred in the bone, and we brought it into the world with us: it is subtil, as an old man; but in all God's saints decaying and withering as an old man, and ready to pass away. It is said to be corrupt; for sin in the soul is the corruption of its faculties: and where it is not mortified, it grows daily worse and worse, and so tends to destruction. *According to the deceitful lusts. Sinful inclinations and desires are deceitful lusts:* they promise men happiness, but render them more miserable; and betray men into destruction, if they are not subdued and mortified. These therefore must be put off, as an old garment that we would be ashamed to be seen in; i. e. they must be subdued and mortified. These lusts prevailed against them in their former conversation, that is, during their state of unregeneracy and heathenism.

2. *The new man must be put on.* It is not enough to shake off corrupt principles; but we must be acted by gracious ones. We must embrace them, espouse them, and get them written on our hearts: it is not enough to cease to do evil; but we must learn to do well. *Be renewed in the spirit of your mind*, ver. 23. i. e. use the proper and prescribed means in order to have the mind, which is a spirit, renewed more and more. *And that ye put on the new man*, ver. 24. By the new man, is meant the new nature, the new creature, which is acted by a new principle, even regenerating grace, enabling a man to lead a new life; that life of righteousness and holiness which Christianity requires. This new man is created, or produced out of confusion and emptiness, by God's almighty power, whose workmanship it is; truly excellent and beautiful. *After God*, in imitation of him, and in conformity to that grand exemplar and pattern. The loss of God's image upon the soul, was both the sinfulness and misery of man's fallen state; and that resemblance which it bears to God, is the beauty, the glory, and the happiness of the new creature. *In righteousness towards men*, including all the duties of the second table: and in holiness towards God, signifying a sincere obedience to the commands of the first table: true holiness, in opposition to the outward and ceremonial holiness of the Jews. We are said to put on this new man, when in the use of all God's appointed means we are endeavouring after this divine nature, this new creature.

This of the more general exhortation to purity and holiness of heart and life. The apostle proceeds to some things more particular. Because generals are not so apt to affect, we are told what are those particular limbs of the old man, that must be mortified; those filthy rags of the old nature, that must be put off: and what the peculiar ornaments of the new man, wherewith we should adorn our Christian profession.

1. Take heed of lying, and be ever careful to speak the truth, ver. 25. *Wherefore, &c.* i. e. since you have been so well instructed in your duty, and are under such obligations to discharge it; let it appear in your future behaviour and conduct, that there is a great and real change wrought in you; particularly by putting away lying: which sin the heathens were very guilty of, af-

firming that a profitable lye was better than an hurtful truth: and therefore the apostle exhorts them to cease from lying, i. e. from every thing that is contrary to truth. This is a part of the old man that must be put off; and that branch of the new man, that must be put on in opposition to it, is speaking the truth in all our converse with others. It is the character of God's people, that they are children who will not lye, who dare not lye, who hate and abhor lying. All who have grace, make conscience of speaking the truth, and would not tell a deliberate lye for the greatest gain and benefit to themselves. The reason here given for veracity, is, *We are members one of another.* Truth is a debt we owe one another. And if we love one another, we shall not deceive, nor lye one to another. We belong to the same society or body, which falsehood and lying tend to dissolve: and therefore we should avoid that, and speak truth. Observe, *That lying is a very great sin; a peculiar violation of the obligations which Christians are under, and very injurious and hurtful to Christian society.*

2. Take heed of anger, and ungoverned passions. *Be ye angry and sin not*, ver. 26. This is borrowed from the LXX translation of *Psal. iv. 4.* where we render it, *Stand in awe, and sin not.* Here is an easy concession; for as such we should consider it, rather than as a command. *Be ye angry.* This we are apt enough to be, God knows. But we find it difficult enough to observe the restriction, *and sin not.* If you have a just occasion to be angry at any time, see that it be without sin: and therefore take heed of excess in your anger. *If we would be angry, and not sin* (says one) *we must be angry at nothing but sin.* And we should be more jealous for the glory of God, than for any interest or reputation of our own. One great and common sin in anger, is to suffer it to burn into wrath, and then to let it rest; and therefore we are here cautioned against that. If you have been provoked, and your spirits greatly discomposed; and if you have bitterly repented any affront that has been offered; before night, calm and quiet your spirits; be reconciled to the offender, and let all be well again. *Let not the sun go down upon your wrath.* If it burn into wrath and bitterness of spirit; O see to it, that you suppress it speedily. Observe, *Though anger, in itself, is not sinful; yet there is the utmost danger of its becoming so, if it be not carefully watched, and speedily suppressed.* And therefore, though anger may come into the bosom of a wise man, it rests only in the bosom of fools. *Neither give place to the devil*, ver. 27. *They who persevere in sinful anger, and in wrath, let the devil into their hearts;* and suffer him to gain upon them, till he bring them to malice, mischievous machinations, &c. *Neither give place to the calumniator, or the false accuser;* so some read the words, i. e. let your ears be deaf to whisperers, tale-bearers, and slanderers.

3. We are here warned against the sin of stealing, the breach of the eighth commandment; and advised to honest industry, and to beneficence. *Let him that stole, steal no more*, ver. 28. It is a caution against all manner of wrong-doing, by force or fraud. Let those of you, who in the time of your Gentilism, have been guilty of this enormity, be no longer guilty of it. But we must not only take heed of the sin, but conscientiously abound in the opposite duty. Not only not steal; but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing that is good. *Idleness makes thieves.* So Chrysostom, τὸ ἄκλειον ἀργίας εἰναι. Stealing is the effect of idleness. *They who will not work, and who are ashamed to beg, expose themselves greatly to temptations to thievery.* Men should therefore be diligent and industrious, not in any unlawful way, but in some honest calling. *Working the thing which is good.* Industry in some honest way, will keep people out of temptation of doing wrong. But there is another reason why men ought to be industrious, viz. that they may be capable of doing some good; as well as that they may be preserved from temptation. *That he may have to give to him that needeth.* They must labour not only that they may live themselves, and live honestly; but that they may distribute for supplying the wants of others. Observe, *Even those who get their living by their labour, should be charitable out of their little, to those who are disabled for labour.* So necessary and incumbent a duty is it to be charitable to the poor, that even labourers and servants, and those who have but little for themselves, must cast their mite into the treasury. God must have his dues, and the poor are his receivers. Observe further, that *those alms that are like to be acceptable to God, must not be the produce of unrighteousness and robbery, but of honesty and industry.* God hates robbery for burnt-offerings.

4. We are here warned against corrupt communication; and directed to that which is useful and edifying, ver. 29. Filthy and unclean words and discourse are poisonous and infectious, as putrid, rotten meat. They proceed from, and prove, a great deal of corruption in the heart of the speaker, and tend to corrupt the minds and manners of others who hear them; and therefore Christians should beware of all such discourse. It may be taken in general, for all that which provokes the lusts and passions of others: We must not only put off corrupt communication; but put on that which is good to the use of edifying. That great use of speech is to edify those with whom we converse. *Christians should endeavour to promote an useful conversation; That it may minister grace unto the hearers:* i. e. that it may be good for, and acceptable to the hearers;

hearers; either in the way of information, counsel, pertinent reproof, or the like. Observe, *It is the great duty of Christians to take care that they offend not with their lips; and that they improve discourse and converse, as much as may be, for the good of others.*

5. Here is another caution against wrath and anger: And further advice to mutual love, and kindly dispositions towards each other, ver. 31, 32 *. By *bitterness, wrath, and anger*, are meant violent inward resentments, and displeasure against others: And by *clamour*, big words, loud threatnings, and other intemperate speeches, by which that bitterness, wrath, and anger, do vent themselves. *Christians should not entertain these vile passions in their hearts; nor be clamorous with their tongues. Evil speaking* signifies all railing, reviling, and reproachful speeches against such as we are angry with. And by *malice* we are to understand that rooted anger which prompts men to design, and to do mischief to others.

The contrary to all this follows. *Be ye kind one to another:* Which implies the principle of love in the heart, and the outward expression of it, in an affable, humble, courteous behaviour and carriage. *It becomes the disciples of Jesus to be kind one to another; as those who have learned, and would teach, the art of obliging. Tender-hearted*, i. e. merciful, and having a tender sense of the distresses and sufferings of others, so as to be quickly moved to compassion and pity. *Forgiving one another.* Occasions of difference will happen among Christ's disciples; and therefore they must be placable, and ready to forgive, therein resembling God himself, who *for Christ's sake hath forgiven them*, and that more than they can forgive one another. Note, *With God there is forgiveness*, and *he forgives sin for the sake of Jesus Christ*, and on the account of that atonement which he hath made to divine justice. Note again, *That they who are forgiven of God, should be of a forgiving spirit*, and that *they should forgive even as God forgives*, sincerely and heartily, readily and cheerfully, universally and for ever, upon the sinner's sincere repentance, as remembering that they pray, *Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them who trespass against us.* Now,

We may observe concerning all these particulars, that the apostle has insisted on, that they belong to the *second table*: From whence Christians should learn the strict obligations they are under to the duties of the *second table*; and that he who does not conscientiously discharge them, can never fear nor love God in truth and in sincerity, whatever he may pretend to.

In the midst of these exhortations and cautions the apostle interposes that general one, *And grieve not the holy Spirit of God*, ver. 30. And by looking to what precedes, and to what follows, we may see what it is that *grieves* the Spirit of God. In the verses *before* it is intimated, that all lewdness and filthiness, lying and corrupt communications that stir up filthy appetites and lusts, grieve the Spirit of God. In what *follows*, it is intimated, that those corrupt passions of bitterness and wrath, and anger, and clamour, evil-speaking and malice, do *grieve* this good Spirit: By which we are not to understand, as though that blessed being could properly be grieved or vexed as we are: But the design of the exhortation is, that we act not towards him in such a manner, as is wont to be grievous and disquieting to our fellow-creatures: We must not do that which is contrary to his holy nature and his will; we must not refuse to hearken to his counsels, nor rebel against his government; which things would provoke him to act towards us, as men are used to do towards them with whom they are displeased and grieved; withdrawing themselves and their wonted kindness from such, and abandoning them to their enemies. Oh! provoke not the blessed Spirit of God to withdraw his presence, and his gracious influences from you! It is a great good reason why we should not grieve him, because *by him we are sealed unto the day of redemption.* There is to be a *day of redemption*; the body is to be redeemed from the power of the grave at the resurrection day, and then God's people will be delivered from all the *effects* of sin, as well as from all sin and misery; which they are not till rescued out of the grave: And then their full and complete happiness does commence. All true believers are *sealed* to that day. God has distinguished them from others, having set his mark upon them: And he gives them the earnest and assurance of a joyful and a glorious resurrection: And the Spirit of God is the seal. Wherever that blessed Spirit is as a sanctifier, he is the earnest of all the joys and glories of the redemption-day. That we should be undone, should God take away his holy Spirit from us.

CHAP. V.

We had several important exhortations in the close of the foregoing chapter, and they are continued in this: Particularly, (1.) We have here an exhortation to mutual love and charity, ver. 1, 2. (2.) Against all manner of uncleanness: With proper arguments and remedies proposed against such sins; and some further cautions are added, and other duties recommended, ver. 3—20. (3.)

The apostle directs to the conscientious discharge of relative duties, from ver. 21. throughout this, and in the beginning of the next chapter.

1. **B**E ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; 2. And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling favour.

Here we have the exhortation to mutual love, or to Christian charity. The apostle had been insisting on this in the former chapter; and particularly in the last verses of it, to which the particle *therefore* refers, and connects what he had said there, with what is contained in these verses, thus: Because God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven you, *therefore* be ye followers of God, or imitators of him, for so the word signifies. *Pious persons should imitate the God whom they worship, as far as he has revealed himself as imitable by them.* They must conform themselves to his example, and have his image renewed upon them. This puts a great honour upon practical religion, that it is the imitation of God. We must be holy, as God is holy, merciful as he is merciful, perfect as he is perfect. But there is no one attribute of God more recommended to our imitation, than that of his goodness. Be ye imitators of God; or resemble him in every grace, and especially in his love, and in his pardoning goodness. *God is love, and they that dwell in love, dwell in God, and God in them.* Thus he has proclaimed his name, *gracious and merciful, and abundant in goodness.* As dear children, as children (who are wont to be greatly beloved by their parents) do usually resemble them in the lineaments and features of their faces, and in the dispositions and qualities of their minds: Or, as becomes the children of God, who are beloved and cherished by their heavenly Father. Children are obliged to imitate their parents in what is good; especially when dearly beloved by them. The character that we bear of God's children, obliges us to resemble him, especially in his love and goodness, in his mercy and readiness to forgive. And they only are God's *dear children* who do imitate him in these. It follows, *and walk in love*, ver. 2. This Godlike grace should conduct and influence our whole conversation, which is meant by *walking* in it. It should be the principle from which we act, it should direct the ends at which we aim. We should be more careful to give proof of the sincerity of our love one to another. *As Christ also hath loved us*, here the apostle directs us to the example of Christ whom Christians are obliged to imitate, and in whom we have an instance of the most free and generous love that ever was; that great love wherewith he hath loved us. We are all joint-sharers in that love, and partakers of the comfort of it, and therefore should love one another; Christ having loved us all, and given such proof of his love to us: *For he hath given himself for us.* The apostle designedly enlargeth on the subject; for what can yield us more delightful matter for contemplation than this? Christ gave himself to die for us; and the death of Christ was the great sacrifice of atonement. *An offering and a sacrifice to God*; or, an offering, even a sacrifice: A propitiatory sacrifice to expiate our guilt, which had been prefigured in the legal oblations and sacrifices: And this *for a sweet-smelling favour.* Some observe, that the sin-offerings were never said to be of a sweet-smelling favour: But this is said of the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. As he offered himself with a design to be accepted of God; so God did accept, was pleased with, and appealed by, that sacrifice. Note, *As the sacrifice of Christ was efficacious with God; so his example should be prevailing with us, and we should carefully copy after it.*

3. But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named amongst you, as becometh saints: 4. Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. 5. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ, and of God. 6. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. 7. Be not ye therefore partakers with them. 8. For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light. 9. (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth) 10. Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. 11. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. 12. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret. 13. But all things that are reprov'd, are made manifest

* See upon ver. 30. below.

nifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest, is light. 14. Wheresoever he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. 15. See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, 16. Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. 17. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. 18. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit: 19. Speaking to yourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, 20. Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;

These verses contain a caution against all manner of uncleanness, with proper arguments and remedies proposed: And some further cautions are added, and other duties recommended. Filthy lusts must be suppressed, in order to the supporting of holy love. *Walk in love, and shun fornication and all uncleanness.* Fornication is folly committed between unmarried persons. *All uncleanness* includes all other sorts of filthy lusts, which were too common among the Gentiles. Or *covetousness*; which being thus connected, and mentioned as a thing which should not be *once named*, some understand it, in the chaste style of the scripture, of exorbitant, unnatural lust: While others take it, in the more common sense, for an immoderate desire of gain, or an insatiable love of riches, which is spiritual adultery: For by this, the soul which was espoused to God, goes astray from him, and embraceth the bosom of a stranger; and therefore carnal worldlings are called *adulterers*. *Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?* Now, these sins must be dreaded and detested in the highest degree. *Let it not be once named amongst you*, i. e. never in a way of approbation, and without abhorrence, *as becometh saints*, i. e. holy persons, who are separated from the world, and dedicated unto God. The apostle not only cautions against the gross acts of sin, but against what some may be apt to make light of, and think to be excusable. *Neither filthiness*, ver. 4. By which may be understood all wanton and unseemly gestures and behaviour. *Nor foolish talking*, i. e. obscene and lewd discourse; or more generally such vain discourse, as betrays much folly and indiscretion, and is far from edifying the hearers. *Nor jesting*. The Greek word *εὐτεγπείλια*, is the same which Aristotle in his *Ethicks*, makes a virtue; pleasantness of conversation. And there is, no doubt, an innocent and inoffensive jesting, which we cannot suppose the apostle does here forbid. Some understand him of such scurrilous and abusive reflexions, as tend to expose others, and to make them ridiculous: This is bad enough: But the context seems to restrain it to such pleasantries of discourse as is filthy and obscene; which he may also design by that *corrupt*, or putrid, and rotten, communication that he speaks of, *chap. iv. 29*. Of these things, he says they *are not convenient*. Indeed there is more than inconvenience, even a great deal of mischief in them. They are so far from being profitable, that they pollute and poison the hearers. But the meaning is, those things do not become Christians, and are very unsuitable to their profession and character. Christians are allowed to be cheerful and pleasant; but they must be merry and wise. The apostle adds, *but rather giving of thanks*: So far let the Christian's way of mirth be from that of obscene and profane wit, that he delight his mind, and make himself cheerful, by a grateful remembrance of God's goodness and mercy to him, and by blessing and praising him on the account of these. Note, (1.) *We should take all occasions to render thanksgivings and praises to God for his kindness and favours to us.* (2.) *A reflexion on the grace and goodness of God to us, with a design to excite our thankfulness to him, is proper to refresh and delight the Christian's mind, and to make him cheerful.* Dr. Hammond thinks that *ευχαεisia*, may signify gracious, pious, religious discourse in the general; by way of opposition to what the apostle condemns. Our cheerfulness, instead of breaking out into what is vain and sinful, and a profanation of God's name, should express itself as becomes Christians, and in what may tend to his glory. If men did abound more in good and pious expressions, they could not be so apt to utter ill and unbecoming words: For shall *blessing and cursing*, lewdness and thanksgivings, *proceed out of the same mouth?* To fortify us against the sins of uncleanness, &c. the apostle urges several arguments, and prescribes several remedies, in what follows.

1. He urges several arguments. As,

(1.) Consider that these are sins which shut persons out of heaven. *For this ye know*, &c. ver. 5. They knew it, being informed of it by the Christian religion. By a *covetous man*, some understand a lewd, lascivious libertine, who indulges himself in those vile lusts, which were accounted the certain marks of an heathen, and an idolater. Others understand it in the common acceptation of the word; and such a man is an idolater, because there is spiritual idolatry in the love of this world. As the Epi-

cure makes a god of his belly; so the covetous man makes a god of his money; sets those affections upon it, and places that hope, confidence, and delight in worldly good, which should be reserved for God only. He serves mammon instead of God. Of these persons it is said, that they *have no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ, and of God*. That may be, the kingdom of Christ who is God: Or, the kingdom which is God's by nature, and Christ's as he is mediator: The kingdom which Christ hath purchased, and which God bestows. Heaven is here described as a kingdom (as frequently elsewhere) with respect to its eminency and glory, its fulness and sufficiency, &c. In this kingdom, the saints and servants of God have an inheritance: For it is the *inheritance of the saints in light*. But those who are impenitent, and allow themselves, either in the lusts of the flesh, or the love of the world, are not Christians indeed, and so belong not to the kingdom of grace, nor shall they ever come to the kingdom of glory. Let us then be excited to be on our guard against those sins which would exclude and shut us out of heaven.

(2.) These sins bring the wrath of God upon those who are guilty of them. *Let no man deceive you with vain words*, &c. ver. 6. Let none flatter you, as though such things were tolerable, and to be allowed of in Christians: Or, as though they were not very provoking, and offensive unto God: Or, as though you might indulge yourselves in them, and yet escape with impunity. These are *vain words*. Observe, *They who flatter themselves and others, with hopes of impunity in sin, do but put a cheat upon themselves and others*. Thus Satan deceived our first parents, with *vain words*, when he said to them, *ye shall not surely die*. They are *vain words* indeed; for those who trust to them will find themselves wretchedly imposed upon, *for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience*. By *children of disobedience* may be meant the Gentiles, who disbelieved, and refused to comply with, and to submit themselves to the gospel: Or, more generally, all obstinate sinners, who will not be reclaimed, but are given over to disobedience. *Disobedience* is the very malignity of sin. And it is by an usual Hebraism that such sinners are called *children of disobedience*; and such indeed they are from their childhood, going *astray as soon as they are born*. *The wrath of God comes upon such*, because of their sins, sometimes in this world; but more especially in the next. And dare we make light of that which will lay us under the wrath of God? Oh! no. *Be not ye therefore partakers with them*, ver. 7. Do not partake with them in their sins, that you may not share in their punishment. We *partake with* other men in their sins, not only when we live in the same sinful manner that they do, and consent and comply with their temptations and solicitations to sin; but when we encourage them in their sins, prompt them to them; and do not prevent and hinder them, as far as it may be in our power to do so.

(3.) Consider what obligations Christians are under to live at another-guess rate than such sinners do. *For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye*, &c. ver. 8. The meaning is, such courses are very unsuitable to your present condition: For, whereas in your Gentile, and your unregenerate state, ye were *darkness*; you have now undergone a great change. The apostle calls their former condition *darkness* in the abstract, to express the great darkness they were in. They lived wicked and profane lives, being destitute of the light of instruction without, and of the illumination and grace of the blessed Spirit within. Note, *A state of sin is a state of darkness*. Sinners, like men in the dark, are going they know not whither, and doing they know not what. But the grace of God hath produced a mighty change in their souls; *Now are ye light in the Lord*, i. e. are savingly enlightened by the word and the Spirit of God. *Now*, i. e. upon your believing in Christ, and your receiving the gospel. *Walk as children of light*. *Children of light*, according to the Hebrew dialect, signifies those who are in a state of light, endued with knowledge and holiness: Now being such, let your conversation be suitable to your condition and privileges, and accordingly live up to the obligation you are under by that knowledge and those advantages you enjoy. *Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord*, ver. 10. i. e. examining and searching diligently what God has revealed to be his will; and making it appear that you approve it by conforming yourselves unto it. Observe, *We must not only dread and avoid that which is displeasing unto God, but enquire and consider what will be acceptable to him*; searching the scriptures with this view: Thus keeping at the greatest distance from these sins.

2. The apostle prescribes some remedies against them. As, (1.) If we would not be entangled by the lusts of the flesh, we must bring forth *the fruits of the Spirit*, ver. 9. This is expected from the children of light; that being illuminated, they be also sanctified by the Spirit, and thereupon bring forth his fruit: which is *in all goodness*, i. e. an inclination to do good and to shew mercy: and *righteousness*; which signifies justice in our dealings. Thus they are taken more strictly: but more generally, all religion is *goodness and righteousness*. And in and with these must be *truth*, i. e. sincerity and uprightness of heart. (2.) We must have no fellowship with sin, nor sinners, ver. 11. *Sinful works are works of darkness*. They come from the darkness of ignorance: they seek the darkness of concealment, and they lead to the darkness of hell. These works of darkness are *unfruitful works*; there

is nothing got by them at long run ; whatever profit is pretended by sin, it will by no means balance the loss ; for the issue is the utter ruin and destruction of the impenitent sinner. We must therefore *have no fellowship* with these unfruitful works ; *i. e.* as we must not practise them ourselves, so we must not countenance others in the practice of them. There are many ways of our being accessory to the sins of others ; *e. g.* by commendation, counsel, consent, or concealment. And if we share with others in their sin, we must expect to share with them in their plagues. Nay, if we thus have fellowship with them, we shall be in the utmost danger of acting as they do ere long. But *rather* than have fellowship with them, we must *reprove them* ; implying, that if we do not reprove the sins of others we have fellowship with them. We must prudently, and in our places, witness against the sins of others, and endeavour to *convince* them of their sinfulness ; when we can do it seasonably and pertinently, *in our words* ; but especially by the holiness of our lives, and a religious conversation. Reprove their sins by abounding in the contrary duties. One reason given is, *For it is a shame even to speak of those things*, &c. *ver. 12.* They are so filthy and abominable, that it is a shame to mention them, except in a way of reproof ; much more must it be a shame to have any fellowship with them. *The things which are done of them in secret.* The apostle seems to speak of the Gentile idolaters, and of their horrid mysteries, which abounded with detestable wickedness, and which none were permitted to divulge upon pain of death. Observe, *A good man is ashamed to speak that which many wicked people are not ashamed to do* : But as far as their wickedness appears, it should be reproved by good men. There follows *another reason* for such reproof : *But all things that are reproved, are made manifest by the light*, *ver. 13.* The meaning of which passage may be this ; all those unfruitful works of darkness which you are called upon to reprove, are laid open, and made to appear in their proper colours to the sinners themselves, by the light of doctrine, or of God's word, in your mouths, as faithful reprovers ; or by that instructive light which is diffused by the holiness of your lives, and by your exemplary walk. Observe, *That the light of God's word, and the exemplification of it in a Christian conversation, are proper means to convince sinners of their sin and wickedness.* It follows, *for whatsoever doth make manifest, is light*, *i. e.* it is the light that discovers what was concealed before in darkness : and accordingly it becomes those who are *children of light*, who are *light in the Lord*, to discover to others their sins, and to endeavour to convince them of the evil and danger of them, thus shining as lights in the world. The apostle further urges this duty from the example of God or Christ. *Wherefore he saith*, &c. *ver. 14.* *q. d.* in doing this you will copy after the great God, who hath set himself to awaken sinners from the sleep, and to raise them from the death of sin, that they might receive light from Christ. *He saith.* The Lord is constantly saying in his word, what is more particularly expressed, *Isa. x. 1.* Or, Christ, by his ministers, who preach the everlasting gospel, is continually calling upon sinners to this purpose. *Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead.* The same thing in the main is designed by these different expressions ; and they serve to remind us of the great stupidity and the wretched security of sinners ; how insensible they are of their danger, and how unapt they naturally are to spiritual motions, sensations and actions. And when God calls upon them to *awake*, and to *arise*, his meaning is, that they would break off their sins by repentance, and enter on a course of holy obedience ; and he encourages them to essay and to do their utmost that way, by that gracious promise, *And Christ shall give thee light* ; or, Christ shall enlighten thee ; or, shall shine upon thee. He shall bring thee into a state of knowledge, holiness and comfort ; assisting thee with his grace, and refreshing thy mind, with joy and peace here ; and rewarding thee with eternal glory at length. Observe, *When we are endeavouring to convince sinners, and to reform them from their sins, we are imitating God and Christ, in that which is their great design throughout the gospel.* Some indeed understand this as a call to sinners and to saints. To sinners to repent and turn. To saints to stir up themselves to their duty. The former must arise from their spiritual death ; and the other must awake from their spiritual deadness. (3.) Another remedy against sin is circumspection, care, and caution, *ver. 15.* *See then*, &c. This may be understood, either with respect to what immediately precedes. If you are to reprove others for their sins, and would be faithful to your duty in this particular, you must look well to yourselves, and to your own behaviour and conduct. And indeed, *They only are fit to reprove others, who walk with due circumspection and care themselves* : Or else, we have here another remedy, or rather preservative from the before-mentioned sins, and this I take to be the design of the apostle ; it being impossible to maintain purity and holiness of heart and life, without great circumspection and care. *Walk circumspectly* ; or, as the word signifies, accurately, exactly, in the right way. In order to which we must be frequently consulting our rule, and the directions we have in the sacred oracles. *Not as fools*, who walk at all adventures, and who have no understanding of their duty, nor of the worth of their souls ; and through neglect, supineness, and want of care, fall into sin and destroy themselves. *But as wise* ; as persons taught of God, and endued with wisdom from above. *Circumspect walking is the ef-*

fect of true wisdom : but the contrary, of folly. It follows, *redeeming the time*, &c. *ver. 16.* Literally, buying the opportunity. It is a metaphor taken from merchants and traders, who diligently observe and improve the seasons for merchandize and trade. *It is a great part of Christian wisdom to redeem the time.* Good Christians must be good husbands of their time ; and take care to improve it to the best purposes, by watching against temptations ; by doing good while it is in the power of their hands ; by filling it up with proper employment ; one special preservative from sin. They should make the best use they can of the present seasons of grace. Our time is a talent given us by God, for some good end ; and it is mispent and lost, when it is not employed according to his design. If we have lost our time heretofore, we must endeavour to redeem it, by doubling our diligence in doing our duty for the future. The reason given is, *because the days are evil* : Either by reason of the wickedness of those who dwell in them : or, rather as they are troublesome and dangerous times to you who live in them. Those were times of persecution wherein the apostle wrote this : the Christians were in jeopardy every hour. When the days are evil, we have one superadded argument to redeem time ; especially, because we know not how soon they may be worse. People are very apt to complain of bad times ; it were well if that would stir them up to redeem time. *Wherefore*, says the apostle, *ver. 17.* *i. e.* because of the badness of the times, *be ye not unwise*, *i. e.* ignorant of your duty, and negligent about your souls : *But understanding what the will of the Lord is.* Study, consider, and further acquaint yourselves with the will of God as determining your duty. Observe, *Ignorance of our duty, and neglect of our souls, are evidences of the greatest folly ; while an acquaintance with the will of God, and a care to comply with it bespeak the best and truest wisdom.*

In the three following verses the apostle warns against some other particular sins, and urges some other duties.

1. He warns against the sin of drunkenness. *And be not drunk with wine*, *ver. 18.* This was a sin very frequent among the heathens ; and particularly on occasion of the festivals of their gods ; and more especially in their *Bacchanalia* : then they were wont to inflame themselves with wine ; and all manner of inordinate lusts were consequent upon it ; and therefore the apostle adds, *wherein*, or, in which drunkenness, *is excess.* The word *ἀσώτεια* may signify luxury, or dissoluteness ; and it is certain that drunkenness is no friend to chastity and purity of life ; but it virtually contains all manner of extravagance ; and transports men into gross sensuality and vile enormities. Note, *Drunkenness is a sin that seldom goes alone ; but often involves men in other instances of guilt.* It is a sin very provoking to God, and a great hindrance to the spiritual life. The apostle may design all such intemperance and disorder, as are opposite to that sober and prudent demeanour, he intends in his advice to redeem the time.

2. Instead of being filled with wine, he exhorts them to *be filled with the Spirit.* Those who are full of drink, are not like to be full of the Spirit ; and therefore this duty is opposed to the former sin. The meaning of the exhortation is, that men should labour for a plentiful measure of the graces of the Spirit, that would fill their souls with holy joy, strength, and courage ; which things sensual men expect their wine should inspire them with. We cannot be guilty of any *excess* in our endeavours after these : Nay, we *ought not* to be satisfied with *a little* of the Spirit, but to be aspiring after greater measures, so as to be *filled* with the Spirit. Now, by this means we shall come to *understand what the will of the Lord is* ; for the Spirit of God is given as a Spirit of wisdom and of understanding. And because those who are filled with the Spirit will be carried out in acts of devotion, and all the proper expressions of it, therefore the apostle exhorts,

3. To sing unto the Lord, *ver. 19.* Drunkards are wont to sing obscene and profane songs. The heathens in their Bacchanals used to sing hymns to Bacchus, whom they called the god of wine. Thus they express *their joy* ; but the Christian's joy should express itself in songs of praise to his God. In these they should *speak to themselves* in their assemblies and meetings together, for mutual edification. By *psalms* may be meant David's psalms, or such compositions as were fitly sung with musical instruments. By *hymns* may be meant such others as were confined to matter of praise, as those of Zacharias, Simeon, &c. *Spiritual songs* may contain a greater variety of matter, doctrinal, prophetic, historical, &c. Observe here, (1.) That *singing of psalms and hymns is a gospel-ordinance* : it is an ordinance of God, and appointed for his glory. (2.) That *though Christianity is an enemy to profane mirth, yet it encourageth joy and gladness, and the proper expressions of these in the professors of it.* God's people have reason to rejoice and to sing for joy. They are to *sing and to make melody in their hearts* ; not only with their voices, but with inward affection ; and then their doing this will be as delightful and acceptable to God as musick used to be to us, and it must be with a design to please him, and to promote his glory that we do this ; and then it will be done to the Lord.

4. Thanksgiving is another duty that the apostle exhorts to, *ver. 20.* We are appointed to sing psalms, &c. for the expression of our thankfulness to God : but though we are not *always* singing,

singing, we should be *always giving thanks*, i. e. we should never want a *disposition* for this duty, as we never want *matter* for it. We must continue it throughout the whole course of our lives; and we should give thanks for *all things*; not only for *spiritual* blessings enjoyed, and *eternal* ones expected; for what of the former we have *in hand*; and for what of the other, we have *in hope*; but for *temporal* mercies too: not only for our comforts, but also for our sanctified afflictions: not only for what immediately concerns *ourselves*, but for the instances of God's kindness and favour to *others* also. It is our duty in *every thing* to give thanks, *unto God, and the Father*; to God as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our Father in him; in whose *name* we are to offer up all our prayers and praises, and spiritual services, that they may be acceptable to God.

21. Submitting your selves one to another in the fear of God. 22. Wives, submit your selves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. 23. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the Saviour of the body. 24. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. 25. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it: 26. That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water, by the word, 27. That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy, and without blemish. 28. So ought men to love their wives, as their own bodies: he that loveth his wife, loveth himself. 29. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: 30. For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. 31. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. 32. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. 33. Nevertheless, let every one of you in particular, so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.

Here the apostle begins his exhortation to the discharge of relative duties; and as a general foundation for these duties, he lays down that rule, *ver. 21.* There is a mutual *submission* that Christians owe one to another; condescending to bear one another's burdens. Not advancing themselves above others, or domineering over one another, and giving laws to one another. St. Paul was an example of this truly Christian temper, who *became all things to all men.* We must be of a yielding, and of a submissive spirit, and ready to all the duties of the respective places and stations that God hath allotted to us in the world. *In the fear of God*, i. e. so far as is consistent with the fear of God; and for his sake; and out of conscience towards him; and that hereby we give proof that we truly fear him. Where there is this mutual condescension and submission, the duties of all relations will be the better performed. From *ver. 22.* to the end, he speaks of the duties of husbands and wives; and he speaks of these in a Christian manner, setting the church as an example of the wife's subjection; and Christ as an example of love in husbands.

1. The duty prescribed to wives is *submission to their husbands in the Lord*, *ver. 22.* which *submission* includes the honouring and the obeying them; and that from a principle of love to them: And they must do this in compliance with God's authority, who has commanded it, which is doing it, *as unto the Lord.* Or it may be understood by way of similitude and likeness; that the sense may be; as being devoted to God, you submit yourselves unto him. From the former sense we may learn, that *by a conscientious discharge of the duties we owe to our fellow-creatures, we obey and please God himself:* And from the latter, that God *not only requires and insists on those duties which immediately respect himself, but such as respect our neighbours too.* The apostle assigns the reason of this submission from wives. *For the husband is the head of the wife*, *ver. 23.* The metaphor is taken from the head in the natural body, which being the seat of reason, of wisdom, and of knowledge, and the fountain of sense and motion, is more excellent than the rest of the body. God has given the man the pre-eminence, and a right to direct and govern by creation, and in that original law of the relation, *Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee:* And whatever there is of uneasiness in that; it is an effect of sin coming into the world: And generally the man has (what he ought to have) a superiority in wisdom and knowledge. He is therefore the head; *even as Christ is the head of the church.* There is a resemblance of Christ's authority over the church, in that superiority and headship which God hath appointed to the husband. The apostle adds, *and he is the Saviour of the body.* Christ's authority is exercised over the church for the saving her from evil, and the supplying her with

every thing good for her: In like manner should the husband be employed for the protection and comfort of his spouse; and therefore she should the more cheerfully subject herself unto him: So it follows, *Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ*, (*ver. 24.*) with cheerfulness, with fidelity, with humility, &c. *so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing*, i. e. in every thing to which their authority justly extends itself; in every thing lawful, and consistent with duty to God.

2. The duty of husbands (on the other hand) is *to love their wives*, *ver. 25.* For without this they would abuse their superiority and headship; and wherever this prevails as it ought to do, it will infer the other duties of the relation; it being a special and peculiar affection that is required in her behalf. And the love of Christ to the church is proposed as an example of this; which love of his, is a sincere, a pure, an ardent, and a constant affection; and that notwithstanding the imperfections and failures that she is guilty of. The greatness of his love to the church appeared in his *giving himself* unto the death for it. Observe, As *the church's objection* to Christ is proposed as an exemplar to wives; so *the love of Christ to his church* is proposed as a pattern to husbands: and while such exemplars are offered to both, and so much required of each, neither has reason to complain of the divine injunctions. The love which God requires from the husband in behalf of his wife, will make an amends for that *subjection* that he demands from her to her husband: and the prescribed *subjection* of the wife, will be an abundant return for that *love* of the husband which God hath made her due.

The apostle having mentioned Christ's love to the church enlarges upon it; assigning the reason why he *gave himself* for it, *viz.* That he might *sanctify* it in this world, and *glorify* it in the next, *ver. 26, 27.* That he might *sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water, by the word*, *ver. 26.* i. e. that he might endue all his members with a principle of holiness; and deliver them from the guilt, the pollution and the dominion of sin. The instrumental means whereby this is effected, are the instituted sacraments, particularly *the washing* of baptism, and the preaching and reception of the gospel. And that he might *present it to himself*, &c. *ver. 27.* Dr. Lightfoot thinks the apostle alludes here to the Jews extraordinary great curiousness in their washings for purification. They were careful that there should be no wrinkle to keep the flesh from the water; and no spot or dirt which was not thoroughly washed. Others understand him as alluding to a garment come new out of the fuller's hand, purged from spots, stretched from wrinkles; the former newly contracted, the latter by long time and custom. That he might *present it to himself*, i. e. that he might perfectly unite it to himself in the great day, *a glorious church*, i. e. perfect in knowledge and in holiness, *not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing*, nothing of deformity or defilement remaining, but being entirely amiable and pleasing in his eye, *holy and without blemish*, free from the least remains of sin. *The church in general, and particular believers, will not be without spot, or wrinkle, till they come to glory.* And from this and the former verse together we may take notice, that *the glorifying of the church is intended in the sanctifying of it:* And that *those, and those only, who are sanctified now, shall be glorified hereafter.* So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies, &c. *ver. 28.* The wife being made *one* with her husband, (not in a natural, but in a civil and in a relative sense) this is an argument why he should love her with as cordial and as ardent an affection as that with which he loves himself. *For no man ever yet hated his own flesh*, *ver. 29.* i. e. no man in his right senses ever hated himself, however deformed, or whatever his imperfections might be; so far from it that he *nourisheth and cherisheth it:* he uses himself with a great deal of care and tenderness; and is industrious to supply himself with every thing convenient or good for him, with food and clothing, &c. *even as the Lord the church.* As the Lord nourisheth and cherisheth the church, which he furnishes with all things that he sees needful or good for her; with whatever conduces to her everlasting happiness and welfare. The apostle adds, *For we are members of his body, of his flesh and of his bones*, *ver. 30.* He assigns this a reason why Christ does nourish and cherish his church, because all that belong to it *are members of his body*, &c. i. e. of his mystical body. Or, we are members out of his body: All that grace and glory which the church has, is from Christ; as *Eve* was taken out of the man. But (as one observes) it being the manner of the sacred writings to express a complex body, by the enumeration of the several parts of it; as the heaven and earth for the world; evening and morning, for the natural day, &c. so here by body, flesh and bones, we are to understand himself; the meaning of the verse being that we are members of Christ. *For this cause*, &c. *ver. 31.* because they are one, as Christ and his church are one; *shall a man leave his father and mother*; the apostle refers to the words of Adam, when Eve was given to him for a meet-help, *Gen. ii. 24.* We are not to understand by them, as though a man's obligation to other relations were cancelled upon his marriage; but only that this relation is to be preferred to all others; there being a nearer union betwixt these two, than betwixt any others; that the man must rather leave any of those than his wife. *And they two shall be one one flesh*, that is, by virtue of the matrimonial bond. *This is a great mystery*, *ver. 32.* Those words of Adam just mentioned by

by the apostle, are spoken literally of marriage: but they have also a hidden mystical sense in them, relating to the union betwixt Christ and his church, of which the conjugal union betwixt Adam and the mother of us all, was a type; though not instituted or appointed by God to signify this; yet it was a kind of a natural type, as having a resemblance to it. *I speak concerning Christ and the church.*

After this the apostle concludes this part of his discourse with a brief summary of the duty of husbands and wives, *ver. 33.* *Nevertheless, q. d.* But though there be such a secret, mystical sense, yet the plain literal sense concerns you. *Let every one of you in particular, so love his wife even as himself, i. e.* with such a sincere, peculiar, singular, and prevailing affection as that is which he bears to himself. *And the wife see that she reverence her husband.* Reverence consists of love and esteem, which produce a care to please; and of fear, which awakens a caution lest just offence be given: And that the wife thus reverence her husband, is the will of God, and the law of the relation.

C H A P. VI.

In this chapter, (1.) *The apostle proceeds in the exhortation to relative duties, which he began in the former: Particularly he insists on the duties of children and parents; and of servants and masters, ver. 1—9.* (2.) *He exhorts and directs Christians how to behave themselves, in the spiritual warfare with the enemies of their souls; and to the exercise of several Christian graces, which he proposes to them as so many pieces of spiritual armour, to preserve and defend them in the conflict, ver. 10—18.* (3.) *We have here the conclusion of the epistle, in which he takes his leave of them, recommending himself to the prayers of the believing Ephesians, and praying for them, ver. 19—24.*

1. **C**HILDREN, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. 2. Honour thy father and mother, (which is the first commandment with promise) 3. That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. 4. And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. 5. Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ: 6. Not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; 7. With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: 8. Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free. 9. And ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your master also is in heaven, neither is there respect of persons with him.

Here we have further directions concerning relative duties, in which the apostle is very particular.

1. The duty of children to their parents. *Come ye children, hearken to me, I will teach you the fear of the Lord.* The great duty of children is to obey their parents, *ver. 1.* Parents being the instruments of their beings, God and nature have given them an authority to command, in subserviency to God; and if children will be obedient to their pious parents, they will be in a fair way to be pious as they. And that obedience which God demands from their children, in their behalf, includes an inward reverence, as well as the outward expressions and acts. Obey in the Lord. Some take this as a limitation, and understand it thus, as far as is consistent with your duty to God. We must not disobey our heavenly Father, in obedience to earthly parents: For our obligation to God is prior and superior to all others. I take it rather as a reason. Children, obey your parents; for the Lord hath commanded it: Obey them therefore for the Lord's sake, and with an eye to him. Or, it may be a particular specification of the general duty. Obey your parents, especially in those things which relate to the Lord. Your parents teach you good manners, and therein you must obey them. They teach you what is for your health, and in that you must obey them: But the chief things in which you are to do it, are the things pertaining to the Lord. Religious parents charge their children to keep the ways of the Lord, *Gen. xviii. 19.* They command them to be found in the way of their duty towards God, and to take heed of those sins that their age is incident to; and in these things especially they must see that they be obedient. There is a general reason given; *for this is right, i. e.* there is a natural equity in it, and God hath enjoined it: That it highly becomes Christians. It is the order of nature that parents command, and children obey. Though this may seem a hard saying, yet it is duty, and it must be done by such as would please God, and approve themselves to him. For the proof of this, the apostle quotes

the law of the fifth commandment; which Christ was so far from designing to abrogate and repeal, that he came to confirm it; as appears by his vindicating it, *Matt. xv. 4, &c.* *Honour thy father and mother, ver. 2.* which honour implies reverence, obedience; and relief and maintenance, if these be needed. The apostle adds, *which is the first commandment with promise.* Some little difficulty ariseth from this, which we should not overlook; because some who plead for the lawfulness of images, bring this as a proof that we are not obliged by the second commandment. But there is no manner of force in the argument. The second commandment hath not a particular promise; but only a general declaration, or assertion which relates to the whole law, of God's keeping mercy for thousands. And then by this is not meant the first commandment of the decalogue that has a promise; for there is no other after it that has, and therefore it would be improper to say it is the first: But the meaning may be this, this is a prime or chief commandment, and it has a promise; and is the first commandment in the second table; and it hath a promise: And the promise is, *That it may be well with thee, &c. ver. 3.* Observe, That whereas the promise in the commandment hath reference to the land of Canaan, the apostle here shews that that, and other promises, which we have in the Old Testament relating to the land of Canaan, are to be understood more generally. That you may not think that the Jews only, to whom God gave the land of Canaan, were bound by the fifth commandment, he here gives it a further sense, *That it may be well with thee, &c.* Outward prosperity and long life, are blessings promised to those who keep this commandment. This is the way to have it well with us. And obedient children are often rewarded with outward prosperity; not indeed that it is always so. There are instances of such children who meet with much affliction in this life: But ordinarily it is thus rewarded; and where it is not, it is made up with something better. Observe, (1.) *The gospel has its temporal promises, as well as spiritual ones.* (2.) *Although the authority of God be sufficient to engage us in our duty, yet we are allowed to have respect to the promised reward: And, (3.) Though it contain some temporal advantage, even that may be considered as a motive and encouragement to our obedience.*

2. The duty of parents. *And ye fathers, ver. 4.* Or ye parents. (1.) *Do not provoke your children to wrath.* Though God has given you power, you must not abuse that power; remembering that your children are, in a particular manner, pieces of yourselves; and therefore ought to be governed with great tenderness and love. Be not impatient with them; use no unreasonable severities, and lay no rigid injunctions upon them. When you caution them, when you counsel them, when you reprove them, do it in such a manner, as not to provoke them to wrath. In all such cases deal prudently and wisely with them, endeavouring to convince their judgments, and to work upon their reason. (2.) *Bring them up well; in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.* In the discipline of proper and of compassionate correction; and in the knowledge of that duty which God requires of them, and by which they may become better acquainted with him. Give them a good education. It is the great duty of parents to be careful in the education of their children. Not only bring them up as the brutes do, taking care to provide for them; but bring them up in nurture and admonition, in such a manner as is suitable to their reasonable natures. Nay, not only bring them up as men, in nurture and admonition: But as Christians, in the admonition of the Lord. Let them have a religious education. Instruct them to fear sinning; and inform them of, and excite them to the whole of their duty towards God.

3. The duty of servants, and that also is summed up in one word, which is, obedience. He is largest on this article; as knowing there was the greatest need of it. These servants were generally slaves. That civil servitude is not inconsistent with Christian liberty. They may be the Lord's freemen, who are slaves to men. *Your masters according to the flesh, ver. 5. i. e.* who have the command of your bodies, but not of your souls and consciences: God alone has dominion over these. Now with respect to servants, he exhorts

(1.) That they obey with fear and trembling. They are to reverence those who are over them; fearing to displease them, and trembling lest they should justly incur their anger and indignation.

(2.) That they be sincere in their obedience. In singleness of heart; not dissembling obedience, when they design disobedience; but serving them with faithfulness.

(3.) They should have an eye to Jesus Christ in all the service that they perform to their masters, *ver. 5, 6, 7.* doing service as to the Lord, and not to men; i. e. not to men only, or principally. When servants, in the discharge of the duty of their places, have an eye to Christ, this puts an honour upon their obedience, and an acceptableness into it. Service done to their earthly masters with an eye to him, becomes acceptable service to him also. To have an eye to Christ, is to remember that he sees them, and is ever present with them; and that his authority obliges them to a faithful and conscientious discharge of the duties of their station.

(4.) They must not serve their masters with eye-service, *ver. 6.* Not only when their master's eye is upon them; but they must be

be as conscientious in the discharge of their duty, when they are absent, and out of the way; because then their master in heaven beholds them: And therefore they must not act *as men-pleasers*; as though they had no regard to the pleasing of God, and approving themselves to him, if they can impose on their masters. Observe, *A steady regard to the Lord Jesus Christ will make men faithful and sincere in every station of life.*

(5.) What they do, they must do cheerfully. *Doing the will of God from the heart*; serving their masters, as God wills they should, not grudgingly, or by constraint; but from a principle of love to them, and their concerns. This is *doing it with good-will*, ver. 7. which will make their service easy to themselves, pleasing to their masters, and acceptable to the Lord Christ. There should be *good-will* to their masters; *good-will* to the families they are in; and especially a readiness to do their duty to God. Observe, *Service performed with conscience, and from a regard to God, though it be to unrighteous masters, will be accounted by Christ as service done to himself.*

(6.) Let faithful servants trust God for their wages, while they do their duty in his fear. *Knowing that whatsoever good thing*, ver. 8. how poor and mean soever it may be, considered in itself. *The same shall be receive of the Lord*, i. e. the reward of the same, by a *metonymy*. Though his master on earth should neglect, or abuse him, instead of rewarding him, he shall certainly be rewarded by the Lord Christ. *Whether he be bond or free*, whether he be a poor bond-servant, or a freeman, or master. Christ regards not these differences of men at present; nor will he in the great and final judgment. You think a prince, or a magistrate, or a minister, that does his duty here, will be sure to receive his reward in heaven: But what capacity am I, a poor servant, in, of recommending myself to the favour of God? Why, God will *as certainly* reward thee for the meanest drudgery, that is done from a sense of duty, and with an eye to himself. And what can be said more proper, both to engage and to encourage servants to their duty?

4. The duty of masters. *And ye masters do the same things unto them*, ver. 9. i. e. Act after the same manner. Be just to them, as you expect they should be to you: Shew the like *good-will* and concern for them, and be careful herein to approve yourselves to God. Observe, *Masters are under as strict obligations to discharge their duty to their servants, as those which lie upon servants, to be obedient and dutiful to them, forbearing threatening; ἀνέχουσιν*, moderating threatening, and remitting the evils which you threaten them with. Remember that your servants are made of the same mould with yourselves, and therefore be not tyrannical and imperious over them, *knowing that your master also is in heaven*, some copies read, by *your* and *their* master: You have a master to obey, who makes this your duty; and you and they are but fellow-servants in respect of Christ. That you will be as punishable by him, for the neglect of your duty, or for acting contrary to it, as any others of meaner condition in the world. You are therefore to shew favour to others, as ever you expect to find favour with him; and you will never be a match for him, though you may be too hard for your servants. *Neither is there respect of persons with him*; a rich, a wealthy, and a dignified master, if he be unjust, imperious, and abusive, is not a jot the nearer being accepted of God, for his riches, wealth, and honour. He will call masters and servants to an impartial account for their carriage one to another; and will neither spare the one, because they are more advanced, nor be severe towards the other, because they are inferior, and mean in the world. If masters and servants would both consider their relation and obligation to God, and the account they must shortly give to him, they would be more careful of their duty to each other.

Thus the apostle concludes his exhortation to relative duties.

10. Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. 11. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. 13. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. 14. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breast-plate of righteousness; 15. And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16. Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. 17. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: 18. Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance, and supplication for all saints;

Here is a general exhortation to constancy in our Christian course, and to courage in our Christian warfare. Is not our

life a warfare? it is so; for we struggle with the common calamities of human life. Is not our religion much more a warfare? it is so; for we struggle with the opposition of the powers of darkness, and with many enemies who would keep us from God and heaven. We have enemies to fight against, a captain to fight for, a banner to fight under, and certain rules of war by which we are to govern ourselves. *Finally my brethren*, ver. 10. 9. d. There yet remains, that you apply yourselves to your work and duty, as Christian soldiers. Now, it is requisite, that a soldier have a good heart, and that he be well armed. If Christians be soldiers of Jesus Christ,

1. They must see that they have a good heart on it. This is prescribed here. *Be strong in the Lord*, &c. Those who have so many battles to fight, and who, in their way to heaven, must dispute every step, like a pass, with dint of sword, have need of a great deal of courage. *Be strong therefore*, strong for service, strong for suffering, strong for fighting. Let a soldier be never so well armed without, if he have not within a good heart, his armour will stand him in little stead. Note, *Spiritual strength and courage are very necessary for our spiritual warfare*. Be strong in the Lord; either in his cause, and for his sake; or, rather, in his strength. We have no sufficient strength of our own. Our natural courage is as perfect cowardise; and our natural strength, as perfect weakness; but all our sufficiency is of God. In his strength we must go forth, and go on. By the actings of faith, we must fetch in grace and help from heaven, to enable us to do that, which of ourselves we cannot do, in our Christian work and warfare. We should stir up ourselves to resist temptations in a reliance upon God's all-sufficiency, and the omnipotence of his might.

2. They must be well armed. *Put on the whole armour of God*, ver. 11. i. e. make use of all the proper defensives and weapons for repelling the temptations and stratagems of Satan, e. g. get and exercise *all* the Christian graces, the *whole* armour, that no part be naked and exposed to the enemy. Observe, *That they who would approve themselves to have true grace, must aim at all grace; the whole armour*. It is called the armour of God, because he both prepares and bestows it. We have no armour of our own, that will be armour of proof in a trying time. Nothing will stand us in stead, but the armour of God. This armour is prepared for us, but we must *put it on*, i. e. We must pray for grace; we must use the grace given us, and draw it out into act and exercise, as there is occasion. The reason assigned, why the Christian should be completely armed, is, *that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil*, i. e. that ye may be able to hold out, and to overcome, notwithstanding all his assaults, both of force and fraud; all the deceits he puts upon us, all the snares he lays for us, and all his machinations against us. This the apostle enlarges upon here, and shews,

1. What our danger is, and what need we have to put on this whole armour: Considering what sort of enemies we have to deal with, the devil, and all the powers of darkness. *For we wrestle not against flesh and blood*, &c. ver. 12. The combat for which we are to be prepared is not against ordinary, human enemies; not barely with men compounded of *flesh and blood*; nor against our own corrupt natures singly considered; but against the several ranks of devils, who have a government which they exercise in this world. We have to do,

(1.) With a subtle enemy; an enemy that uses *wiles* and stratagems, as ver. 11. he has a thousand ways of beguiling unstable souls: Hence he is called, *a serpent* for subtilty; *an old serpent*, experienced in the art and trade of tempting.

(2.) He is a powerful enemy. *Principalities*, and *powers*, and *rulers*. They are numerous, they are vigorous; and rule in those heathen nations which are yet in darkness. The dark parts of the world are the seat of Satan's empire. Yea, they are usurping princes over all men, who are yet in a state of sin and ignorance. *Satan's is a kingdom of darkness; whereas Christ's is a kingdom of light*.

(3.) They are *spiritual* enemies. *Spiritual wickedness in high places*: or, wicked spirits, so some translate it. The devil is a spirit, a wicked spirit; and our danger is the greater from our enemies, because they are unseen, and assault us ere we are aware of them. The devils are *wicked spirits*, and they do chiefly annoy the saints with, and provoke them to spiritual wickednesses, pride, envy, malice, &c. These enemies are said to be *in high places*, or, in heavenly places; so the word is: Taking heaven (as one says) for the whole *expansum*, or spreading out of the air, betwixt the earth and the stars; the air being the place from which the devils assault us. Or, the meaning may be, *we wrestle* about heavenly places, or heavenly things; so some of the ancients interpret it. Our enemies strive to prevent our ascent to heaven, to deprive us of heavenly blessings, and to obstruct our communion with heaven. They assault us in the things that belong to our souls; and labour to deface the heavenly image in our hearts; and therefore we have need to be upon our guard against them. We have need of faith in our *Christian warfare*, because we have spiritual enemies to grapple with, as well as of faith in our *Christian work*, because we have spiritual strength to fetch in. Thus you see your danger.

2. What

2. What our duty is, viz. to take and put on the whole armour of God, and then to *stand* our ground, and *withstand* our enemies.

(1.) We must *withstand*, ver. 13. We must not yield to the devil's allurements and assaults, but oppose them. Satan is said to stand up against us, 1 *Chron.* xxi. 1. If he stand up against us, we must stand against him; set up, and keep up an interest in opposition to the devil. Satan is the wicked one, and his kingdom is the kingdom of sin; to stand against Satan, is to strive against sin. *That ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, i. e. in the time of temptation, or of any sore affliction.*

(2.) We must stand our ground. *And having done all, to stand.* We must resolve, by God's grace, not to yield to Satan. Resist him, and he will flee. If we give back, he will yet ground. If we distrust, either our cause, or our leader, or our armour, we give him advantage. Our present business is to *withstand* the assaults of the devil; and to *stand* it out, and then *having done all*, that is incumbent on the good soldiers of Jesus Christ, our warfare will be accomplished, and we shall be finally victorious.

(3.) We must stand armed; and this is here most enlarged upon. Here is a Christian in complete armour: And the armour is divine. *Armour of God. Armour of light*, Rom. xiii. 12. *Armour of righteousness*, 2 Cor. vi. 7. The apostle instances in the particulars of this armour, both offensive and defensive. Here is the military girdle or belt: The breast-plate: The greaves, or soldiers shoes: The shield: The helmet, and the sword. It is observable, among them all, there is none for the back; if we turn our back upon the enemy, we lie exposed.

1. Truth or sincerity is our girdle, ver. 14. It was prophesied of Christ, *Isa.* xi. 5. that *righteousness should be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.* That which Christ was girt with, all Christians must be girt with. God desireth truth, i. e. Sincerity, in the inward parts. This is the strength of our loins; and it girds on all the other pieces of our armour, and therefore is first mentioned. I know no religion without sincerity. Some understand it of the doctrine, and the truths of the gospel. They should cleave to us, as the girdle does to the loins, *Jer.* xiii. 11. This will *restrain* from all libertinism and licentiousness, as a girdle restrains and keeps in the body. This is the Christian soldier's belt. Ungirt with this, he is unblest.

2. *Righteousness* must be our breast-plate. The breast-plate secures the vitals, shelters the heart. The righteousness of Christ imputed to us, is our breast-plate against the arrows of divine wrath. The righteousness of Christ implanted in us, is our breast-plate to fortify the heart against the attacks which Satan makes against us. The apostle explains this in 1 *Thess.* v. 8. *Putting on the breast-plate of faith and love.* Faith and love include all Christian graces: For by faith we are united to Christ, and by love to our brethren. These will infer a diligent observance of our duty to God; and a righteous deportment towards men in all the offices of justice, truth, and charity.

3. Resolution must be as the greaves to our legs. *And their feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace*, ver. 15. Shoes, or greaves of brass, or the like, were formerly part of the military armour, 1 *Sam.* xvii. 6. And the use of them was to defend their feet against the gall traps, and sharp sticks, which were wont to be laid privily in the way, to obstruct the marching of the enemy: They who fell upon them being unfit to march. *The preparation of the gospel of peace*, signifies a prepared and resolved frame of heart to adhere to the gospel, and abide by it: Which will enable us to walk with a steady pace in the way of religion, notwithstanding the difficulties and dangers that may be in it. It is stiled *the gospel of peace*, because it brings all sorts of peace; peace with God, with ourselves, and with one another.

It may also be meant of that which *prepares* for the entertainment of the gospel; and that is repentance. With this our feet must be shod: For by living a life of repentance, we are armed against temptations to sin, and the designs of our great enemy.

Dr. Whitby thinks this may be the sense of the words. That ye may be ready for the combat, be ye shod with the gospel of peace; i. e. endeavour after that *peaceable* and quiet mind the gospel calls for. Be not easily provoked, or prone to quarrel: But shew all gentleness, and all long-suffering to all men; and this will as certainly preserve you from many great temptations and persecutions, as did those shoes of brass the soldiers from those gall traps, &c.

4. Faith must be our shield. *Above all, or chiefly, taking the shield of faith*, ver. 16. This is more necessary than any of them. Faith is all in all to us in an hour of temptation. The breast-plate secures the vitals; but with the shield we turn every way. *This is the victory over the world, even our faith.* We are to be fully persuaded of the truth of all God's promises and threatnings; such a faith being of great use against temptations. Consider faith, as it is *the evidence of things not seen, and the substance of things hoped for*; and it will appear to be of admirable use for this purpose. And faith as receiving Christ, and the benefits of redemption, so deriving grace from him, is like a shield, a sort of universal defence. Our enemy the devil is here

called *the wicked one*. He is wicked himself, and he endeavours to make us wicked. His temptations are called *darts*, because of their swift and undiscerned flight, and the deep wounds that they give to the soul. *Fiery darts*, by way of allusion to the poisonous darts which were wont to inflame the parts which were wounded with them, and therefore were so called; as the serpents with poisonous stings are called *fiery serpents*. Violent temptations, by which the soul is set on fire of hell, are the darts which Satan shoots at us: Faith is the shield, with which we must quench these fiery darts; wherein we should receive them, and so render them ineffectual, that they may not hit us, or at least that they may not hurt us. Observe, *Faith acted upon the word of God, and applying that; acted upon the grace of Christ, and improving that, quenches the darts of temptations.*

5. Salvation must be our helmet, ver. 17. i. e. Hope, which has salvation for its object; so 1 *Thess.* v. 8. The helmet secures the head. A good hope of salvation well founded, and well built, will both purify the soul, and keep it from being defiled by Satan: And it will comfort the soul, and keep it from being troubled and tormented by Satan. He would tempt us to despair; but good hope keeps us trusting in God, and rejoicing in him.

6. *The word of God, is the sword of the Spirit.* The sword is a very necessary and useful part of a soldier's furniture. The word of God is very necessary, and of great use to the Christian, in order to his maintaining, and his succeeding in, the spiritual warfare. It is called *the sword of the Spirit*, because it is of the Spirit's inditing: And he renders it efficacious and powerful, and *sharper than a two-edged sword*. Like Goliath's sword, none to that; with this we assault the assailants. Scripture-arguments are the most powerful arguments to repel a temptation with. Christ himself resisted Satan's temptations with, *It is written*, Matth. iv. init. This being hid in the heart will preserve from sin, *Psal.* cxix. 11. And will mortify and kill those lusts and corruptions that are latent there.

7. Prayer must buckle on all the other parts of our Christian armour, ver. 18. We must join prayer with all these graces for our defence against these spiritual enemies: imploring help and assistance of God, as the case requires. And we must pray *always*: Not as though we were to do nothing else but pray: For there are other duties of religion, and of our respective stations in the world, that are to be done in their place and season: But we should keep up constant times of prayer, and be constant to them. We must pray upon all occasions, and as often as our own, and others necessities call us to it. We must always keep up a disposition to prayer; and should intermix ejaculatory prayers with other duties, and with common business. Though set and solemn prayer may sometimes be unseasonable, (as when other duties are to be done) yet pious ejaculations can never be so. We must pray *with all prayer and supplication*; with all kinds of prayer, publick, private, and secret; social and solitary; solemn and sudden: With all the parts of prayer; confession of sin, petition for mercy, and thanksgivings for favours received. We must pray *in the Spirit*, i. e. our Spirits must be employed in the duty; and we must do it by the grace of God's good Spirit. We must *watch thereunto*, endeavouring to keep our hearts in a praying frame; and taking all occasions, and improving all opportunities for the duty. Watch to all the motions of our own hearts towards the duty. When God saith, *Seek ye my face*; our hearts must comply, *Psal.* xxvii. 8. This we must do *with all perseverance*. We must abide by the duty of prayer, whatever change there may be in our outward circumstances; and we must continue in it as long as we live in the world. We must *persevere in a particular prayer*; not cutting it short, when our hearts are disposed to enlarge, and there is time for it, and our occasions call for it. We must likewise *persevere in particular requests*, notwithstanding some present discouragement and repulses. And we must pray *with supplication*, not for ourselves only, but *for all saints*; for we are members one of another. Observe, *None are so much saints, and in so good a condition in this world, but they need our prayers; and they ought to have them.*

Now from hence the apostle passeth to the conclusion of the epistle.

19. And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel: 20. For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak. 21. But that ye also may know my affairs, and how I do, Tychicus a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things: 22. Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that ye might know our affairs, and that he might comfort your hearts. 23. Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. 24. Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.

Here,

Here, 1. He desires their prayers for him, *ver. 19.* Having mentioned *supplication for all saints*, he puts himself into the number. *We must pray for all saints; and particularly, for God's faithful ministers. Brethren pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run and be glorified.* Observe, What it is he would have them pray for in his behalf; *that utterance may be given unto me*; that I may be enlarged from my present restraints, and so have liberty to propagate the faith of Christ; and that I may have ability to express myself in a suitable and becoming manner: *And that I may open my mouth boldly*, i. e. that I may deliver the whole counsel of God, without any base fear, shame, or partiality. *To make known the mystery of the gospel*; some understand it of that part of the gospel which concerns the calling of the Gentiles, that had hitherto, as a mystery, been concealed. But *the whole gospel* was a mystery, till made known by divine revelation; and it is the work of Christ's ministers to publish it. Observe, St. Paul had a great command of language; they called him *Mercurius*, because he was *the chief speaker*, Acts xiv. 12. and yet he would have his friends ask of God the gift of *utterance* for him. He was a man of great courage, and often signalized himself for it; yet he would have them pray that God would give him boldness. He knew as well what to say as any man; yet he desires them to pray for him, that he may *speak as he ought to speak*. The argument with which he enforces his request, is, that for the sake of the gospel he was *an ambassador in bonds*, *ver. 20.* He was persecuted and imprisoned for preaching the gospel; though, notwithstanding he continued in the embassy committed to him by Christ; and persisted in preaching it. Observe, (1.) *It is no new thing for Christ's ministers to be in bonds.* (2.) *It is a hard thing for them to speak boldly, when that is their case.* And lastly, *The best and most eminent ministers have need of, and may receive advantage by, the prayers of good Christians; and therefore should earnestly desire them.*

Having thus desired their prayers,

2. He recommends Tychicus unto them, *ver. 21, 22.* He sent him with this epistle, that he might acquaint them with what other churches were formed of, *viz. how* he did, and *what* he did: How he was used by the Romans in his bonds; and how he behaved himself in his present circumstances. *It is desirable to good ministers, both that their Christian friends should know their state; and likewise to be acquainted with the condition of their friends:* For by this means they may the better help each other in their prayers. *And that he might comfort their hearts:* by giving such an account of his sufferings, of the cause of them,

and of the temper of his mind, and his behaviour under them, as might prevent their fainting at his tribulations, and even minister matter of joy and thanksgiving unto them. He tells them, that Tychicus was *a beloved brother, and faithful minister in the Lord.* He was a sincere Christian, and so *a brother in Christ*: He was *a faithful minister* in the work of Christ; and he was very dear to St. Paul: Which makes his love to these Christian Ephesians the more observable, in that he should *now* part with so good and dear a friend for their sakes, when his company and conversation must have been peculiarly delightful and serviceable to himself. But *the faithful servants of Jesus Christ are wont to prefer a publick good to their own private or personal interests.*

3. He concludes with his good wishes and prayer for them; and not for them only, but for *all* the brethren, *ver. 23, 24.* His usual benediction was, *grace and peace*: Here it is, *peace be to the brethren, and love with faith.* By *peace* we are to understand all manner of peace: Peace with God, peace with conscience, peace among themselves; and all outward prosperity is included in the word *q. d.* I wish the continuance and increase of all happiness to you. *And love with faith.* This in part explains what he means in the following verse, by *grace*: Not only *grace in the fountain*, or the love and favour of God; but *grace in the streams*, i. e. the grace of the Spirit flowing from that divine principle; faith and love including all the rest. And it is the continuance and increase of these, that he desires for them, in whom they were already begun. It follows, *from God the Father, &c. All grace and blessings are derived to the saints from God, through the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ our Lord.*

The closing benediction is more extensive than the former; for in this he prays for *all* true believers at Ephesus, and every where else. *It is the undoubted character of all the saints that they love our Lord Jesus Christ. Our love to Christ is not acceptable, unless it be in sincerity:* Indeed there is no such thing as love to Christ, what ever men may pretend, where there is not sincerity. The words may be read, *Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruption*, i. e. who continue constant in their love to him, so as not to be *corrupted* out of it by any baits or seductions whatsoever: And whose love to him is *un-corrupted* by any opposite lust, or the love of any thing displeasing to him. *Grace*, i. e. the favour of God, and all good, (spiritual and temporal) that is the product of it, is and shall be, with all them who thus love our Lord Jesus Christ. And it is, or ought to be the desire and prayer of every lover of Christ, that it may be so with all his fellow-Christians. *Amen*, so be it.

A N

E X P O S I T I O N

O F T H E

Epistle of St. PAUL to the PHILIPPIANS,

W I T H

P R A C T I C A L O B S E R V A T I O N S.

Philippi was a chief city of the western part of Macedonia, *περὶ τῆς μερὶδος τῆς Μακεδονίας πόλις*, Acts xvi. 12. It took its name from Philip, the famous king of Macedon, who repaired and beautified it; and was afterwards made a Roman colony. Near this place were the *Campi Philippici*, remarkable for the famous battles between Julius Cæsar, and Pompey the Great; and that between Augustus and Anthony on one side, and Cæsar and Brutus on the other. But it is most remarkable among Christians for this epistle, which was written when Paul was prisoner at Rome, A. D. 62.

St. Paul seems to have had a very particular kindness for the church at Philippi, which he himself had been instrumental in planting; and though he had the care of all the churches, he had, upon that account, a particular fatherly tender care of this. Those whom God has employed us to do any good to, we should look upon ourselves both encouraged and engaged to study to do more good to. He looked upon them as his children, and having begotten them by the gospel, he was desirous by the same gospel to nourish and nurse them up.

1. *He was called in an extraordinary manner to preach the gospel at Philippi, Acts xvi. 9. A vision appeared to Paul in the night: There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia to help us. He saw God going before him, and was encouraged to use all means for carrying on the good work which was begun among them, and building upon the foundation which was laid.*
2. *At Philippi he suffered hard things. He was scourged and put into the stocks, Acts xvi. 33. Yet he had not the less kindness for the place, for the hard usage he met with there. We must never love our friends the less for the ill treatment which our enemies give us.*
3. *The beginnings of that church were very small; Lydia was converted there, and the jaylor and a few more: yet that did not discourage him. If good be not done at first, it may be done afterwards; and the last works may be more abundant. We must not be discouraged by small beginnings.*
4. *It seems by many passages in this epistle, that this church at Philippi grew a flourishing church; and particularly was very kind to St. Paul. He had reaped of their temporal things, and he made a return in spiritual things. He acknowledges the receipt of a present they had sent him, chap. iv. 18. and that when no church communicated with him as concerning giving and receiving besides, ver. 15. and he gives them a prophet's, an apostle's reward, in this epistle, which is of more value than thousands of gold and silver.*

CHAP. I.

He begins with the inscription and benediction, ver. 1, 2. He gives thanks for the saints at Philippi, ver. 3—7. His great affection and concern for their spiritual welfare, ver. 7—9. His prayers for them, ver. 9—11. His care to prevent their offence at his sufferings, ver. 12—20. His readiness to glorify Christ by life or death, ver. 21—27. He concludes with a double exhortation to strictness and constancy, ver. 27—30.

1. **P**AUL and Timotheus the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus, which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:
2. *Grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.*

We have here the inscription and benediction. Observe, 1. The persons *writing* the epistle, Paul and Timotheus. Though Paul was only *divinely* inspired, he joins Timothy with himself, to express his own *humility*, and put *honour* upon Timothy. They who are aged, and strong, and eminent, should pay respect, and support the reputation of those who are younger and weaker, and of less note. *The servants of Jesus Christ.* Not only in the common relation of his *disciples*, but in the peculiar work of the *ministry*, the high *office* of an *apostle* and *evangelist*. Observe, The highest honour of the greatest apostle, and most eminent ministers, is to be the *servants* of Jesus Christ; not the *masters* of the churches, but the *servants* of Christ.

Observe, 2. The persons *to whom* it is directed.

1. *To all the saints in Christ who were at Philippi.* He mentions the *church* before the *ministers*, because the ministers are for the church, and for their *edification* and benefit: Not the churches for the ministers, and for their dignity, dominion and wealth. *Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy,* 2 Cor. i. 24. They are not only the servants of Christ, but the servants of the *church* for his sake. *Our selves your servants for Jesus sake,* 2 Cor. iv. 5.

Observe, The Christians here are called *saints*; set apart for God, or sanctified by his Spirit, either by visible *profession*, or real *holiness*. And they who are not really saints on earth, will never be saints in heaven. Observe, It is directed to *all the saints*, one as well as another, even the meanest, the poorest, and those of the least gifts. Christ makes no difference; the *rich* and the *poor* meet together in him: And the ministers must not make a difference in their care and tenderness upon these accounts. We must not *have the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ with respect of persons*, James ii. 1. *Saints in Christ Jesus*; saints are accepted only by virtue of their being in Christ Jesus, or as they are *Christians*. Out of Christ the best saints will appear *sinners*, and unable to stand before God.

2. It is directed to the *ministers*, or church officers; *with the bishops and deacons*. The *bishops*, or elders, in the first place, whose office it was to teach and rule; and the *deacons*, or overseers of the poor, who took care of the outward business of the house of God; the *place*, the *furniture*, the *maintenance* of the ministers, and *provision* for the poor. These were all the offices which were then known in the church, and which were of divine appointment. The apostle in the direction of his epistle to a Christian church, acknowledges but two orders, which he calls *bishops* and *deacons*. And whosoever shall consider, that the same characters and *titles*, the same *qualifications*, the same acts of office, and the same *honour* and respect, are every where ascribed throughout the New Testament, to those who are called *bishops*

and *presbyters*, as Dr. Hammond, and other learned men allow; will find it difficult to make them a different *office*, or distinct *order* of ministry in the scripture times.

3. Here is the apostolical *benediction*, ver. 2. *Grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.* This is the same, almost word for word, in all the epistles; to teach us, That we must not be shy of *forms*, though we are not to be tied down to them, especially such which are not scriptural. The only form in the Old Testament is that of a *benediction*, Numb. vi. 23. *On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them; the Lord bless thee and keep thee: the Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.* So in the New Testament, the good which is wished is spiritual good, *grace and peace*: the free favour and good-will of God; and all the blessed fruits and effects of it: and that *from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ*; jointly from them both, though in a different way. Observe, (1.) No peace without grace. Inward peace springs from a sense of divine favour. (2.) No grace and peace, but from God our Father, the fountain and original of all blessings; the *Father of lights, from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift*, Jam. i. 17. (3.) No grace and peace from God our Father, but in and through our *Lord Jesus Christ*. Christ as Mediator is the chanel of conveyance of all spiritual blessings to the church, and directs the disposal of them to all his members.

3. I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, 4. (Always in every prayer of mine for you all, making request with joy) 5. For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now; 6. Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:

The apostle proceeds, after the inscription and benediction, to *thanksgiving* for the saints at Philippi; he tells them what it was he thanked God for upon their account. Observe here, 1. Paul remembered them: he bore them much in his thoughts; and though they were out of sight, and he was at a distance from them, yet they were not out of his mind. Or, *Upon every mention of you*; ἐπὶ παντὶ τῇ μνησίᾳ ὑμῶν. As he often thought of them, so he often spoke of them, and delighted to hear them spoken of. The very mention of them was grateful to him: it is a pleasure to hear of the welfare of an absent friend.

2. He remembered them *with joy*. At Philippi he was evilly entreated; there he was scourged and put into the stocks, and for the present saw little of the fruit of his labour; and yet he remembers Philippi with joy. He looked upon his sufferings for Christ as his credit, his comfort, his crown, and was pleased at every mention of the place where he suffered. So far was he from being ashamed of them, or loth to hear of the scene of his sufferings, that he remembered it with joy.

3. He remembered them in *prayer*; *always in every prayer of mine for you all*, ver. 4. The best remembrance of our friends, is to remember them at the throne of grace. Paul was much in prayer for his friends, for all his friends, for these particularly. It should seem by this manner of expression, that he mentioned at the throne of grace the several churches he was interested in, and concerned for, particularly and by name. He had seasons of prayer for the *church at Philippi*. God gives us leave to be thus free with him; though for our comfort, he knows who we mean when we do not name them.

4. He *thanked God* upon every joyful remembrance of them. Observe, Thanksgiving must have a part in every prayer, and

whatsoever is the matter of our rejoicing, ought to be the matter of our thanksgiving. What we have the comfort of, God must have the glory of. He thanked God, as well as made *requests with joy*. As holy joy is the heart and soul of thankful praise; so thankful praise is the lip and language of holy joy.

5. As in our prayers, so in our thanksgiving, we must eye God as our God: *I thank my God*. It encourages us in prayer, and enlarges the heart in praise, to see every mercy coming from the hand of God as our God. *I thank my God upon every remembrance of you*: We must thank our God for others graces and comforts, and gifts and usefulness, as we receive the benefit of them, and God receives glory by them.

But what is the matter of this thanksgiving?

1. He gives thanks to God for the comfort he had in them, *ver. 5. for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now*. Observe, That gospel fellowship is a good fellowship; and the meanest Christians have fellowship in the gospel with the greatest apostles; for the gospel salvation is a *common salvation*, Jude 3. and they *obtain like precious faith* with them, 2 Pet. i. 1. They who sincerely receive and embrace the gospel, have fellowship in it *from the very first day*: a new-born Christian, if he is true born, is interested in all the promises and privileges of the gospel from the *first day* of his becoming such. *Until now*: Observe, That it is a great comfort to ministers, when they who begin well, hold on, and persevere.

Some by their *fellowship in the gospel*, understand their liberality towards the propagating of the gospel, and translate *κοινωνία*, not *communion*, but *communication*. But comparing it with Paul's thanksgiving on the account of other churches, it rather seems to be taken more generally, for the fellowship which they had in faith and hope, and holy love with all good Christians: A fellowship in gospel-promises, ordinances, privileges and hopes; and this from the *first day until now*.

2. For the confidence he had concerning them, *ver. 6. Being confident of this very thing, &c.* Observe, That the confidence of Christians, is the great comfort of Christians, and that we may fetch matter of praise from our hopes as well as from our joys; we must give thanks not only for what we have the present possession and evidence of, but what we have the future prospect of. Paul speaks with much confidence concerning the good estate of others, hoping well concerning them in the judgment of charity, and being confident in the judgment of faith, that if they were sincere they should be happy. *That he who hath begun a good work in you, will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ*. A good work among you, *ἐν ὑμῖν*, so it may be read; understand it in the general, of the planting the church among them. He who hath planted Christianity in the world, will preserve it as long as the world stands. Christ will have a church till the mystery of God shall be finished, and the *mystical body* completed. The church is *built upon a rock*, and the *gates of hell shall not prevail against it*. But it is rather to be applied to particular persons, and then it speaks of the certain accomplishment of the work of grace wherever it is begun.

Observe here, (1.) The work of grace is a good work, a blessed work; for it makes us good, and is an earnest of good to us. It makes us like God, and fits us for the enjoyment of God. That may well be called a good work which does us the greatest good.

(2.) Wherever this good work is begun, it is of God's beginning: *He hath begun a good work in you*. We could not begin it ourselves, for we are by nature *dead in trespasses and sins*: and what can dead men do towards raising themselves to life; or how can they begin to act, till they are enlivened in the same respect in which they are said to be dead? It is God who *quickens them who are thus dead*, Eph. ii. 1. Colos. ii. 13.

(3.) The work of grace is but begun in this life; it is not finished here; as long as we are in this imperfect state, there is still something more to be done.

(4.) If the same God who begins the good work, did not undertake the carrying on and finishing it, it *would lie* for ever unfinished: He must perform it, who begun it.

(5.) We may be confident, or well persuaded, that God not only will not forsake, but that he will finish and crown the work of his own hands. For, *as for God his work is perfect*.

(6.) The work of grace will never be perfected *till the day of Jesus Christ*, i. e. the day of his *appearance*; when he shall come to judge the world, and finish his mediation, then this work will be complete, and the *top-stone* will be brought forth with *shouting*. We have the same expression, *ver. 10*.

7. Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, in as much as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace. 8. For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all, in the bowels of Jesus Christ.

The apostle expresses the mighty affection he had for them, and concern for their spiritual welfare, *ver. 7. I have you in my heart*: He loved them as his own soul, and they lay near his

heart. He thought much of them, and was in care about them. Observe,

1. Why he had them in his heart. *In as much as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers of my grace*, i. e. they had received benefit by him and by his ministry: they were partakers of that grace of God, which by him, and through his hands, was communicated to them. This makes people dear to their ministers, their receiving benefit by their ministry. Or, *You are partakers of my grace*, i. e. you have joined with me in doing and suffering: they were partakers of his affliction, by sympathy and concern, and readiness to assist him. This he calls being partakers of *his grace*: for they who suffer with the saints, are and shall be comforted with them; and they shall share in the reward, who bear their part of the burden. He loved them, because they stuck to him in his bonds, and in the *defence and confirmation of the gospel*: they were as ready to appear in their places, and according to their capacity, for the defence of the gospel, as the apostle was in his; and therefore he had them *in his heart*. Fellow-sufferers should be dear one to another; they who have ventured and suffered in the same good cause of God and religion, should for that reason love one another dearly: or, because *you have me at heart*; *διὰ τὸ ἔχειν με ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ ὑμῶν*. They distinguished their respects to him, by adhering firmly to the doctrine he preached, and readily suffering for it along with him: the truest mark of respect toward our ministers, is receiving and abiding by the doctrine they preach.

2. The evidence of it: *It is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart*. By this it appeared that he had them in his heart, because he had a good opinion of them, and good hopes concerning them. Observe, It is very proper to think the best of other people, and as well as we can of them; to suppose as well of them as the matter will admit, in all cases.

3. An appeal to God concerning the truth of this, *ver. 8. For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ*; having them in his heart, he longed after them, i. e. either he longed to see them, longed to hear from them; or he longed for their spiritual welfare, and their increase and improvement in knowledge and grace. He had *joy in them*, *ver. 4.* because of the good he saw and heard of among them: yet still he longed after them to hear of more of it among them; and he *longed after them all*; not only those among them who were witty and wealthy, but even the meanest and poorest: and he *longed greatly* after them, or with strong affection, and great good will; and this *in the bowels of Jesus Christ*, with that tender concern which Christ himself hath, and hath shewn to precious souls. Paul was herein a *follower of Christ*, and all good ministers should aim to be so. Oh the *bowels* of compassion which are in Jesus Christ to poor souls! It was in compassion to them he undertook their salvation, and put himself to so vast an expence to compass it. Now in conformity to the example of Christ, Paul had a compassion for them, and longed after them all *in the bowels of Jesus Christ*: Shall not we pity and love those souls, whom Christ had such a love and pity for? And for this he *appeals* to God: *God is my record*. It was an inward disposition of mind he expressed towards them, which God only is a witness to the sincerity of, and therefore to him he appeals. Whether you know it or no, or are sensible of it; God who knows the heart, knows it.

9. And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge, and in all judgment; 10. That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere, and without offence till the day of Christ; 11. Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God.

These verses contain the prayers he put up for them. Paul often lets his friends know what it was he begged of God for them, that they might know what to beg for themselves, and be directed in their own prayers; and that they might be encouraged to hope they should receive from God the quickening, strengthening, establishing, comforting grace, which so powerful an intercessor, as Paul was, asked of God for them. It is an encouragement to us to know that we are prayed for by our friends, who, we have reason to think, have an interest at the throne of grace. It is intended likewise for their direction in their walk, and that they might labour to answer his prayers for them; for by that it would appear, that God had answered them. Paul in praying thus for them, expected good concerning them: it is an inducement to us to do our duty, that we may not disappoint the expectations of praying friends and ministers. He prays,

1. That they might be a loving people, and that good affections might abound among them: *That your love might abound yet more and more*. He means it of their love both to God, and one another, and all men. Love is the fulfilling both of the law and of the gospel. Observe, They who abound much in any grace, yet have still need to abound *more and more*; because there is still

still something wanting in it, and we are imperfect in our best attainments.

2. That they might be a knowing, judicious people; that love might abound *in knowledge, and in all judgment*. It is not a blind love will recommend us to God, but a love grounded upon knowledge and judgment. We must love God, because of his infinite excellence and loveliness; and love our brethren, because of what we see of the image of God upon them. Strong passions without knowledge and a settled judgment, will not make us complete in the will of God; and sometimes do more hurt than good. The Jews had a *zeal of God*, but not *according to knowledge*, and were transported by it to violence and rage, *Rom. x. 2. John xvi. 2.*

3. That they might be a discerning people: This would be the effect of their knowledge and judgment: *That ye may approve the things which are excellent*, ver. 10. Or, as it is in the margin, *Try the things which differ*; *εἰς τὸ δοκιμάζειν ὑμᾶς τὰ διαφέροντα*. That we may approve the things which are excellent upon the trial of them, and discern their difference from other things. Observe, The truths and laws of Christ are excellent things; and it is necessary that we every one approve of them, and esteem them such. We only need to try them, to approve of them, and they will easily recommend themselves to any searching and discerning mind.

4. That they might be an honest, upright-hearted people: *That ye may be sincere*. Sincerity is our gospel-perfection, that in which we should have our conversation in the world, and which is the glory of all our graces. When the *eye is single*, when we are inward with God in what we do, are really what we appear to be, and mean honestly; then we are sincere.

5. That they might be an inoffensive people; that ye may be *without offence until the day of Christ*: Not apt to take offence; and very careful not to give offence to God or their brethren. To *live in all good conscience before God*, Acts xxiii. 1. and to *exercise ourselves to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men*, Acts xxiv. 16. And we must continue to the end *blameless*, that we may be presented so at the *day of Christ*. He will present the church *without spot and wrinkle*, Eph. vi. 27. and *present believers faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy*, Jude ult.

6. That they might be a fruitful, useful people, ver. 11. *Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, &c.* From God is our fruit found, and therefore from him it must be asked: The *fruits of righteousness*, i. e. the evidences and effects of our sanctification; the duties of holiness springing from a renewed heart, the *root of the matter in us*: *Being filled with them*. Observe, They who do much good should still endeavour to do more. The fruits of righteousness brought forth for the glory of God, and edification of his church, should really fill us, and wholly take us up. Fear not being emptied by bringing forth the fruits of righteousness, for you will be filled with them. These fruits are *by Jesus Christ*, by his strength and grace, for *without him we can do nothing*: He is the root of the good olive, from which it derives its fatness: we are *strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus*, 2 Tim. i. 2. and *strengthened with might by his Spirit*, Eph. iii. 16. And they are *unto the glory and praise of God*: We must not aim at our own glory in our fruitfulness, but at the *praise and glory of God*; that *God may be glorified in all things*, 1 Pet. iv. 11. and *whatsoever we do, we must do all to the glory of God*, 1 Cor. x. 31. It is much for the honour of God, when Christians not only are good, but do good, and *abound in good works*.

12. But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things *which happened unto me*, have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel.

13. So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places; 14. And many of the brethren in the Lord waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. 15. Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will. 16. The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: 17. But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel. 18. What then? notwithstanding every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice. 19. For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, 20. According to my earnest expectation, and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but *that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death*.

We see here the care the apostle takes to prevent their being offended at his sufferings. He was now a prisoner at Rome; this might be a stumbling-block to those who had received the

gospel by his ministry. They might be tempted to think, if this doctrine was indeed of God, God would not suffer one who was so active and instrumental in preaching and propagating it, to be thrown by as a despised, broken vessel. They might be shy of owning this doctrine, lest they should be involved in the same trouble themselves. Now, to take off the *offence of the cross*, he expounds this dark and hard chapter of his sufferings, and makes it very easy, intelligible, and reconcileable to the wisdom and goodness of God, who employed him.

1. He suffered by the sworn enemies of the gospel, who laid him in prison, and aimed at taking away his life; but they should not be stumbled at this, for good was brought out of it, and it tended to the furtherance of the gospel, ver. 12. *The things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel*. A strange chymistry of providence this, to extract so great a good out of so great an evil, as the enlargement of the gospel, by the confinement of the apostle: *I suffer trouble as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound*, 2 Tim. ii. 9. They cannot imprison the word of God; that has its *free course*, though I am confined. But how was this?

(1.) It alarmed those who were without, ver. 13. *My bonds in Christ, or for Christ, are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places*. The emperor, the courtiers, the magistrates, are convinced that I do not suffer as an evil doer, but as an honest man, with a good conscience. They know I suffer for Christ, and not for any wickedness. Observe, (1.) Paul's sufferings made him known at court, where perhaps he would never have otherwise been known; and might lead some of them to enquire after the gospel for which he suffered, which they might otherwise have never heard of. (2.) When his bonds were manifest in the palace, they were manifest in all other places. The sentiments of the court have a great influence on the sentiments of the people: *Regis ad exemplum, &c.*

(2.) It emboldened them who were within. As his enemies were startled at them, so his friends were heartened by them. *Upright men shall be astonished at this, and the innocent shall stir up himself against the hypocrite. The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he who hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger*, Job xvii. 8, 9. So it was here, ver. 14. *Many of the brethren in the Lord waxing confident by my bonds*: The expectation of trouble for their religion, in general, perhaps disheartened and discouraged them; but when they saw Paul imprisoned for Christ, they were so far from being deterred from preaching Christ, and praising his name, that it made them the more bold: For they could gladly suffer in Paul's company. If they should be hurried from the pulpit to the prison, they could be reconciled to it, because they should be there in such good company. Besides, the comfort which Paul had in his sufferings, his extraordinary consolations received from Christ in a suffering state, greatly encouraged them. They saw that they who served Christ, served a good master, who could both bear them up, and bear them out in their sufferings for him. *Waxing confident by my bonds*. *Πεποιθότας*. They were more fully satisfied and persuaded by what they saw. Observe the power of divine grace; that which was intended by the enemy to discourage the preachers of the gospel, was over-ruled for their encouragement. And *are much more bold to speak the word without fear*: They see the worst of it, and therefore are not afraid to venture. Their confidence gave them courage, and their courage preserved them from the power of fear.

2. Paul suffered from false friends, as well as from enemies, ver. 15, 16. *Some preach Christ even of envy and strife. The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely*. Now this would be a stumbling-block and discouragement to some, that there were those who envied Paul's reputation in the churches, and the interest he had among the Christians; and endeavoured to supplant, and undermine him. They were secretly pleased when he was laid up in prison, that they might have the better opportunity to steal away the peoples affections; and laid themselves out the more in preaching, that they might gain to themselves the reputation they envied him. *Supposing to add affliction to my bonds*: They thought hereby to grieve his spirit, and make him afraid of losing his interest; uneasy under his confinement, and impatient for release. It is sad there should be men who profess the gospel, especially who preach it, who are governed by such principles as these; who should preach Christ in spite to Paul, and to increase the affliction of his bonds. Let us not think it strange, if in these later and more degenerate ages of the church, there should be any such.

However there were others who were animated by Paul's suffering to preach Christ the more vigorously. *Some also of good-will, and of love*: From sincere affection to the gospel, that the work might not stand, while the workman was laid up. *Knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel*: They knew that he was appointed to support and propagate the gospel in the world, against all the violence and opposition of its enemies; and were afraid lest the gospel should suffer by his confinement. This made them the more bold to preach the word, and *supply his lack of service to the church*.

It is very affecting to see how easy the apostle was in the midst of all, *ver. 18. Notwithstanding every way whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; I therein do rejoice, yea and I will rejoice*: Note, The preaching of Christ is the joy of all who wish well to his kingdom among men. Since it may tend to the good of many, we ought to rejoice in it, though it is done in pretence, and not in reality. It is God's prerogative to judge of the principles men act upon, and is out of our line. Paul was so far from envying those who had liberty to preach the gospel, while he was under confinement; that he rejoiced in the preaching it, even by those who did it in pretence, and not in truth: How much more then should we rejoice in the preaching of the gospel, by them who do it in truth, yea though it should be with much weakness, and some mistake?

Two things made the apostle rejoice in the preaching the gospel.

1. Because it tended to the salvation of the souls of men, *ver. 19. I know that this shall turn to my salvation*. Observe, God can bring good out of evil; and what doth not turn to the salvation of the ministers, may yet by the grace of God be made to turn to the salvation of the people. What reward can they expect, who preach Christ out of *strife and envy, and contention*, and to add affliction to a faithful minister's bonds; who preach in pretence, and not in truth? and yet even this may turn to the salvation of others. And Paul's rejoicing in it turned to his salvation too. This is one of the things which *accompanies salvation*, to be able to rejoice that Christ is preached, though it be to the diminution of us, and our reputation. This noble spirit appeared in John the Baptist at the first publick preaching of Christ. *This my joy therefore is fulfilled: He must increase, but I must decrease*, John iii. 29, 30. Let him shine though I am obscured, and his glory be exalted though upon my ruins. Others understand this expression of the malice of his enemies being defeated, and contributing towards his deliverance from his confinement. *Through your prayers, and the supply of the Spirit of Christ*. Note, Whatsoever turns to our salvation is by the supply, or the aids and assistance of the Spirit of Christ; and that prayer is the appointed means of fetching in that supply. The prayers of the people may bring a supply of the Spirit to their ministers, to enable them in suffering, as well as preaching the gospel.

2. Because it would turn to the glory of Christ, *ver. 20*. Where he takes occasion to mention his own entire devotedness to the service and honour of Christ. *According to my earnest expectation and hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, &c.* Here observe,

(1.) That the great desire of every true Christian is, that Christ may be magnified and glorified; that his name may be great, and his kingdom come.

(2.) That they who truly desire that Christ may be magnified, desire that he may be *magnified in their body*. They present their *bodies a living sacrifice*, Rom. xii. 1. and *yield their members as instruments of righteousness unto God*, Rom. vi. 13. They are willing to serve his designs, and be instrumental to his glory, with every member of their body, as well as faculty of their soul.

(3.) That it is much for the glory of Christ, that we should serve him boldly, and not be ashamed of him: With freedom and liberty of mind, and without discouragement. *That in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness Christ may be magnified*. The boldness of Christians is the honour of Christ.

(4.) That they who make Christ's glory their desire and design, may make it their expectation and hope. If it be truly aimed at, it shall certainly be attained. If in sincerity we pray, *Father glorify thy name*; we may be sure of the same answer to that prayer, which Christ had; *I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again*, John xii. 28.

(5.) They who desire Christ may be magnified in their bodies, have an holy indifference, *whether it be by life or by death*. They refer it to him, which way he will make them serviceable to his glory, whether by their labour, or suffering; by their diligence or patience; by their living to his honour in working for him, or dying to his honour in suffering for him.

21. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

22. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall chuse I wot not. 23. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: 24. Nevertheless, to abide in the flesh, is more needful for you. 25. And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all, for your furtherance and joy of faith: 26. That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me, by my coming to you again.

We have here an account of the life and death of blessed Paul: His life was Christ, and his death was gain. Observe, (1.) It

is the undoubted character of every good Christian, that to him to live is Christ. The glory of Christ ought to be the end of our life, the grace of Christ the principle of our life, and the word of Christ the rule of it. The Christian life is derived from Christ, and directed to him. He is the principle, rule, and end of it. (2.) All those to whom to live is Christ, to them to die *will be gain*. It is great gain, a present gain, everlasting gain. Death is a great loss to a carnal worldly man; for he loses all his comforts, and all his hopes: But to a good Christian it is gain, for it is the end of all his weakness and misery, and the perfection of his comforts, and accomplishment of his hopes: It delivers him from all the evils of life, and brings him to the possession of the chiefest good. Or, *To me to die is gain*, i. e. to the gospel as well as to myself, which will receive a further confirmation by the seal of my blood, as it had before by the labours of my life. So Christ would be *magnified by his death*, *ver. 20*. Some read the whole expression thus: *To me living and dying Christ is gain*, i. e. I desire no more neither while I live, nor when I die, but to win Christ, and be found in him.

It might be thought, if death was gain to him, he would be weary of life, and impatient for death. No, saith he, *ver. 22. If I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour*, i. e. Christ is. He reckoned his labour well bestowed, if he could be instrumental to advance the honour and interest of the kingdom of Christ in the world. It is the *Fruit of my labour*. *Καρπὸς ἔργου*; *operæ pretium*. It is worth while for a good Christian, and a good minister, to live in the world, as long as he can glorify God, and do good to his church. *Yet what I shall chuse I wot not; for I am in a strait betwixt two*. It was a blessed strait which Paul was in, not between two evil things, but between two good things. David was in a strait by three judgments, sword, famine, and pestilence: Paul was in a strait between two blessings; living to Christ, and being with him. Here we have him reasoning with himself upon the matter.

1. His inclination was for death. See the power of faith, and of divine grace; it can reconcile the mind to death, and make us willing to die, though death is the destruction of our present nature, and the greatest natural evil. We have naturally an aversion to death, but he had an inclination to it, *ver. 23. Having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ*. Observe, (1.) It is *being with Christ*, which makes a departure desirable to a good man. It is not simple dying, or putting off the body; it is not of itself, and for its own sake, a desirable thing: But it may be necessarily connected with something else, which may make it truly so. If I cannot be with Christ without departing, I shall reckon it desirable, upon that account, to depart. Observe, (2.) As soon as ever the soul departs, it is immediately with Christ. *This day shalt thou be with me in paradise*, Luke xxiii. 43. *Absent from the body, and present with the Lord*. 2 Cor. v. 8. without any interval between. *Which is far better*, *πολλὸν ὑπέρ* *μᾶλλον κρείσσον*, very much exceeding, or vastly preferable. They who know the value of Christ and heaven, will readily acknowledge it far better to be in heaven, than to be in this world, to be with Christ, than to be with any creature; for in this world we are compassed about with sin, born to trouble, born again to it: But if we come to be with Christ, farewell sin and temptation, farewell sorrow and death for ever.

2. His judgment was rather to live a while longer in this world, for the service of the church, *ver. 24. Nevertheless to abide in the flesh, is more needful for you*. It is needful for the church to have ministers; and faithful ministers can ill be spared, when the *harvest is plenteous*, and the *labourers few*. Observe, That they who have most reason to desire to depart, yet should be willing to continue in the world as long as God has any work for them to do. Paul's strait was not between living in this world, and living in heaven; between these two there is no comparison: But his strait was, between serving Christ in this world, and enjoying him in another. Still it was Christ his heart was upon: Though to advance the interest of Christ and his church, he chose rather to tarry here, where he met with oppositions and difficulties, and to deny himself for a while the satisfaction of his reward.

And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide, and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith, *ver. 25*. Observe here, (1.) What a great confidence Paul had in the divine providence, that it would order all for the best to him. Having this confidence, that it will be needful for you that I should abide in the flesh, I know that I shall abide. (2.) Whatsoever is best for the church, we may be sure God will do. If we know what is needful for the building up the body of Christ, we may certainly know what will be; for he will take care of its interests, and do what is best, all things considered, in every condition it is in. (3.) Observe, What ministers are continued for; *for our furtherance and joy of faith*, i. e. our further advancement in holiness and comfort. (4.) What promotes our *faith and joy of faith*, is very much for our furtherance in the way to heaven. The more faith the more joy, and the more faith and joy, the more we are furthered in our Christian course. (5.) There is need of a settled ministry, not only for the conviction and conversion of sinners, but for the edification of saints, and their furtherance in spiritual attainments.

That

That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me, by my coming to you again, ver. 26. They rejoice in the hopes of seeing him, and enjoying his further labours among them. Observe, (1.) The continuance of ministers with the church, ought to be the rejoicing of all who wish well to the church, and to its interests. (2.) That all our joys should terminate in Christ. Our joy in good ministers, should be our joy in Christ Jesus for them; for they are but the friends of the bridegroom, and are to be received in his name, and for his sake.

27. Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel; 28. And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God. 29. For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake; 30. Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me.

The apostle concludes the chapter with two exhortations.

1. He exhorts them to strictness of conversation, *ver. 27. Only let your conversation be as becometh the gospel of Christ. Observe, They who profess the gospel of Christ, should have their conversation as becomes the gospel; or in a suitableness and agreeableness to it. Let it be as becomes those who believe gospel-truths, submit to gospel-laws, and depend upon gospel-promises; and with an answerable faith, holiness, and comfort. Let it be in all respects as those who belong to the kingdom of God among men, and are members and subjects of it. It is an ornament to our profession, when our conversation is of a piece with it. That whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs.* He had spoke in *ver. 26.* of his coming to them again, and had spoken it with some assurance, though he was now a prisoner; but he would not have them build upon that. Our religion must not be bound up in the hands of our ministers; whether I come or no, let me hear well of you, and do you *stand fast*. Whether ministers come or no, Christ is always at hand: He is nigh to us, never far from us; and hastens his second coming; *the coming of the Lord draws nigh, Jam. v. 8.* Let me hear of you, *That you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel.* Three things he desired to hear of them, and they are all such as become the gospel.

(1.) It becomes those who profess the gospel to *strive* for it, to use an holy violence in taking the kingdom of heaven. The *faith of the gospel*, is the doctrine of faith, or the religion of the gospel. There is that in the faith of the gospel which is worth striving for: If religion is worth any thing, it is worth every thing. There is much opposition, and there is need of striving: A man may sleep and go to hell; but he who will go to heaven must look about him and be diligent.

(2.) The unity and unanimity of Christians become the gospel; *strive together*, not strive one with another: All of you must strive against the common adversary. One spirit and one mind, becomes the gospel, for there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism. There may be a oneness of heart and affection among Christians, where there is diversity of judgment and apprehensions about many things.

(3.) Stedfastness becomes the gospel. *Stand fast in one spirit, with one mind*: Be *stedfast and immovable* by any opposition. It is a shame to religion when the professors of it are off and on, unfixed in their minds, and *unstable as water*; for they will never excel. They who would strive for the faith of the gospel, must stand firm to it.

2. He exhorts them to courage and constancy in suffering, *ver. 28. And in nothing terrified by your adversaries.* The professors of the gospel have all along met with adversaries, especially at the first planting of Christianity. Our great care must be to keep close to our profession, and be constant to it: whatsoever oppositions we meet with we must not be frightened at them, considering the condition of the persecuted is much better and more desirable, than the condition of the persecutors: For persecuting is an *evident token of perdition*; they who oppose the gospel of Christ, and injure the professors of it, are marked out for ruin. But being persecuted is a *token of salvation*: Not that it is a certain mark; many hypocrites have suffered for their religion; but it is a good sign that we are in good earnest in religion, and designed for salvation, when we are enabled in a right manner to suffer for the cause of Christ.

Ver. 29. For to you it is given on the behalf of Christ, not only to believe, but also to suffer for his name. Here are two precious gifts given, and both on the behalf of Christ. (1.) To *believe* in him. Faith is God's gift on the behalf of Christ, who purchased for us, not only the blessedness which is the object of faith, but the grace of faith itself; the ability and disposition to believe

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is from God. 2. To suffer for the sake of Christ, is a valuable gift too. It is a great honour, and a great advantage; for we may be very serviceable to the glory of God, which is the end of our creation, and encourage and confirm the faith of others. And there is a great reward attending it too. *Blessed are you when men shall persecute you, for great is your reward in heaven, Matt. v. 12. And if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him, 2 Tim. ii. 12.* If we suffer reproach and loss for Christ we are to reckon it a great gift, and prize it accordingly; always provided we carry it under our sufferings with the genuine temper of the martyrs and confessors, *ver. 30. Having the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me, i. e. you suffering in the same manner as you saw, and now hear of me that I suffer.* It is not simply the suffering, but the cause; and not only the cause, but the spirit which makes the martyr. A man may suffer in an ill cause, and then he suffers justly; or in a good cause, but with a wrong mind, and then his sufferings lose their value.

CHAP. II.

The apostle proceeds to farther exhortations to several duties; to be like-minded, and lowly-minded, which he presses from the example of Christ, ver. 1—11. And to diligence and seriousness in the Christian course, ver. 12, 13. And to adorn their Christian profession by several suitable graces, ver. 14—18. And concludes with particular notice and commendation of two good ministers, Timothy and Epaphroditus; whom he designed to send to them, ver. 19—30.

1. **I**F there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies; 2. Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. 3. Let nothing be done through strife, or vain-glory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. 4. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. 5. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: 6. Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: 7. But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: 8. And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. 9. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: 10. That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; 11. And that every tongue should confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The apostle proceeds in this chapter where he left off in the last, with farther exhortations to Christian duties. He presses them largely to *like-mindedness*, and *lowly-mindedness*, in conformity to the example of the Lord Jesus, the great pattern of *humility and love*. Where we may observe,

§. 1. The great gospel precept pressed upon us; that is to *love* one another. This is the law of Christ's kingdom, the lesson of his school, the livery of his family. This he represents, *ver. 2.* by being *like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind*. We are of a like mind when we have the same love. Christians should be one in affection, whether they can be one in apprehension or no. This is always in their power, and always their duty, and is the likeliest way to bring them nearer in judgment. *Having the same love.* Observe, That the same love we are required to express to others, others are obliged to express to us. Christian love ought to be mutual love; love, and you shall be loved. *Being of one accord and of one mind*: Not crossing and thwarting, or driving on separate interests; but unanimously agreeing in the great things of God, and keeping the *unity of the Spirit* in other differences. Here observe,

(1.) The pathetic pressing of the duty. He is very importunate with them, knowing what an evidence it is of our sincerity, and what a means of the preservation and edification of the body of Christ. The inducements to brotherly love are these,

1. If there is any *consolation* in Christ: Have you experienced consolation in Christ? evidence that experience by loving one another. The sweetness we have found in the doctrine of Christ, should sweeten our spirits. Do we expect consolation in Christ? if we would not be disappointed, we must love one another. If we have not consolation in Christ, where else can we expect it? They who have an interest in Christ, have consolation in him;

strong and everlasting consolation, Heb. vi. 18. 2 Theff. ii. 16. and therefore ought to love one another.

2. *Comfort of love.* If there is any comfort in Christian love, in God's love to us, in our love to God, or in our brethren's love to us, in consideration of all this, let us be like-minded. If you have ever found that comfort, if you would find it; if you indeed believe that the grace of love is a comfortable grace, abound in it.

3. *Fellowship of the Spirit.* If there is such a thing as communion with God and Christ by the Spirit, such a thing as the communion of saints, by virtue of their being animated and acted by one and the same Spirit; be ye like-minded: for Christian love and like-mindedness will preserve to us our communion with God, and with one another.

4. *Any bowels and mercies,* i. e. in God and Christ toward you. If you expect the benefit of God's compassions to yourselves, be ye compassionate one to another. If there is such a thing as mercy to be found among the followers of Christ; if all who are sanctified have a disposition to holy pity; make it appear this way. How cogent are these arguments? One would think enough to tame the most fierce, and mollify the hardest heart.

Another argument he insinuates is, the comfort it would be to him: *Fulfil ye my joy.* It is the joy of ministers to see people like-minded, and living in love. He had been instrumental in bringing them to the grace of Christ, and love of God: Now, saith he, if ye have found any benefit by your participation of the gospel of Christ, if ye have any comfort in it, or advantage by it, fulfil the joy of your poor minister who preached the gospel to you.

(2.) He proposes some means to promote it.

1. *Doing nothing through strife and vain glory,* ver. 3. There is no greater enemy to Christian love than pride and passion. If we do things in contradiction to our brethren, that is doing them through *strife*: If we do them through *ostentation* of our selves, that is doing them through *vain glory*: Both are destructive of Christian love, and kindle unchristian heats. Christ came to slay all enmities; therefore let there not be among Christians a spirit of opposition. Christ came to humble us; and therefore let there not be among us a spirit of pride.

2. We must *esteem others in lowliness of mind, better than ourselves*; be severe upon our own faults, and charitable in our judgment to others; be quick in observing our own defects and infirmities, but ready to overlook, and make favourable allowances for the defects of others. We must esteem the good which is in others, above that which is in ourselves; for we best know our own unworthiness and imperfections.

3. We must interest ourselves in the concerns of others, not in a way of curiosity and censoriousness, or as *busy-bodies in other men's matters*, but in Christian love and sympathy, ver. 4. *Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.* A selfish spirit is destructive of Christian love. We must be concerned not only for our own credit, and ease, and safety, but for those of others also; and rejoice in others' prosperity as truly as in our own. We must *love our neighbour as ourselves*, and make his case our own.

§. 2. Here is a *gospel-pattern* proposed to our imitation, and that is the example of our Lord Jesus Christ. *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus,* ver. 5. Observe, That Christians must be of Christ's mind: We must bear a resemblance to his life, if we would have the benefit of his death. *If we have not the Spirit of Christ, we are none of his,* Rom. viii. 9. Now what was the mind of Christ? Why he was eminently humble, and this is what we are peculiarly to learn of him: *Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart,* Matth. xi. 29. If we were lowly-minded, we should be like-minded; and if we were like to Christ, we should be lowly-minded. We must walk in the same spirit, and in the same steps with the Lord Jesus, who humbled himself to sufferings and death for us; not only to satisfy God's justice, and pay the price of our redemption, but to set us an example, and that we might *follow his steps*. Now here we have the two natures, and the two states of our Lord Jesus. It is observable, that the apostle having occasion to mention the Lord Jesus, and the mind which was in him, takes the hint to enlarge upon his person, and to give a particular description of him. It is a pleasing subject, and a gospel minister need not think himself out of the way when he is upon it, any fit occasion will be readily taken.

1. Here are the two *natures* of Christ: His divine nature, and human nature.

(1.) Here is his *divine nature*: *Who being in the form of God,* ver. 6. partaking of the divine nature, as the eternal and only begotten Son of God. This agrees with *John i. 1. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God*; and is of the same import with being the *image of the invisible God*, Col. i. 15. and the *brightness of his glory, and express image of his person*, Heb. i. 3. *He thought it no robbery to be equal with God*: Did not think himself guilty of any invasion of what did not belong to him, or assuming another's right. He said, *I and the Father are one*, Joh. x. 30. It is the highest degree of robbery, for any mere man to pretend to be equal with God, or profess himself *one with the Father*. This is for a man to rob God, not

in *tithes and offerings*, but of the rights of his *Godhead*, Mal. iii. 8.

Some understand *being in the form of God*, ἐν μορφῇ Θεοῦ ὑπαρ-
κων, of his appearance in a divine majestic glory to the patriarchs, and the Jews under the Old Testament; which was often called the glory, and the Shechinah: And the word is used in such a sense by the LXX, and in the New Testament; *Mark xvi. 12. He appeared to the two disciples*, ἐν ἑτέρᾳ μορφῇ, in another form: *Matth. xvii. 2. μετεμορφώθη*; he was transfigured before them. And, *he thought it no robbery to be equal with God*, i. e. He did not greedily catch at, or covet and effect to appear in that glory: He laid aside the majesty of his former appearance, while he was here on earth; which is supposed the sense of the peculiar expression, ἢ ἄρπαγμὸν ἡγήσατο. Vid. bishop Bull's def. cap. ii. sect. 4. & alibi, and Whitby in loc.

(2.) His *human nature*: he was *made in the likeness of men, and found in fashion as a man*: He was really and truly man, took part of our flesh and blood; appeared in the nature and habit of man. And he voluntarily assumed human nature; it was his own act and by his own consent. We cannot say that our participation of the human nature is so. And herein he *emptied himself*; divested himself of the honours and glories of the upper world, and of his former appearance, to clothe himself with the rags of human nature. *He was in all things like to us*, Heb. ii. 17.

2. Here are his two estates, of *humiliation* and *exaltation*.

(1.) His estate of *humiliation*. He not only took upon him the *likeness* and *fashion* of a man, but the *form of a servant*, i. e. a mean man. He was not only *God's servant whom he hath chosen*, but he came to *minister to men*, and was among them as *one who serveth*, in a mean and servile state. One would think that the Lord Jesus, if he would be a man, should have been a prince, and appeared in splendor. But quite the contrary, he took upon him the *form of a servant*. He was brought up meanly, probably working with his supposed father at his trade. His whole life was a life of humiliation, of meanness, and poverty, and disgrace; he had not where to lay his head; lived upon alms, was a *man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief*; did not appear with external pomp, or any marks of distinction from other men. This was the humiliation of his life. But the lowest step of his humiliation was his dying the death of the cross: *He became obedient to death, even the death of the cross*: He not only suffered, but was actually and voluntarily obedient; he obeyed the law which he brought himself under as mediator, and by which he was obliged to die: *I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it again; this commandment have I received of my Father*, John x. 18. And he was *made under the law*, Gal. iii. 4. There is an emphasis laid upon the manner of his dying; which had in it all the circumstances possible, which are humbling; *even the death of the cross*; a cursed, painful, and shameful death; a death *accursed* by the law: *Cursed is he that hangeth on a tree*: full of pain, the body nailed through the nervous parts, the hands and feet, and hanging with all its weight, upon the cross; and the death of a malefactor and a slave, not of a *free man*; exposed as a publick spectacle. Such was the condescension of the blessed Jesus.

(2.) His *exaltation*. *Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him.* His exaltation was the reward of his humiliation; because he humbled himself, God exalted him; and he *highly exalted him*, ἐπεβύβωσε, raised him to an exceeding height. And he exalted his whole person, the human nature as well as the divine; for he is spoken of as being in the form of God, as well as in the fashion of a man. As it respects the divine nature, it could only be a recognizing his rights, or the display and appearance of the glory he had with the Father before the world was, Joh. xvii. 5. Not any new acquisition of glory; and so the Father himself is said to be exalted. But the proper exaltation was of his human nature, which seems to be only capable of it, though in conjunction with the divine. His exaltation here is made to consist in honour and power. In honour; so *he had a name above every name*; a title of dignity above all the creatures, men or angels. And in power, *every knee must bow to him*, i. e. The whole creation must be in subjection to him: *Things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth*: The inhabitants of heaven and earth; the living and the dead. *At the name of Jesus*; not at the sound of the word, but the authority of Jesus; all should pay a solemn homage. And that *every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord*; every nation and language should publicly own the universal empire of the exalted Redeemer; and that *all power in heaven and earth is given to him*, Matt. xxviii. 18. Observe, the vast extent of the kingdom of Christ, it reaches to heaven and earth, and to all the creatures in each; to angels as well as men, and to the dead, as well as the living. *To the glory of God the Father*: Observe, It is to the glory of God the Father, to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord; for it is his will, that *all men should honour the Son, as they honour the Father*, Joh. v. 23. It redounds to the honour of the Father, whatsoever respect is paid to Christ: *He who receiveth me, receiveth him who sent me*, Matt. x. 40.

12. Wherefore my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence; work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. 13. For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

He exhorts them to diligence and seriousness in the Christian course. *Work out your own salvation.* It is the *salvation of our souls*, 1 Pet. i. 9. and our *eternal salvation*, Heb. v. 9. and contains deliverance from all the evils sin had brought upon us, and exposed us to; and the possession of all good, and whatsoever is necessary to our complete and final happiness. Observe, It concerns us above all things to secure the welfare of our souls. Whatever becomes of other things, let us take care of our best interests. And it is *our own salvation*, the salvation of our *own souls*. It is not for us to judge other people, we have enough to do to look to our selves; and though we must promote the *common salvation*, Jude 3. as much as we can, yet we must upon no account neglect our own. We are required to *work out our salvation*, *κατεργάζεσθαι*. The word signifies *working thoroughly* at a thing, and taking *true pains*. Observe, we must be diligent in the use of all the means which conduce to our salvation. We must not only work *at* our salvation, by doing something now and then about it; but we must work *out* our salvation, by doing all which is to be done, and persevering therein to the end. Salvation is the great thing we should mind, and set our hearts upon; and we cannot attain salvation without the utmost care and diligence. He adds,

With fear and trembling, i. e. with great care and circumspection, tremble for fear lest you miscarry and come short. Be careful to do every thing in religion in the best manner; and fear lest under all your advantages you should so much as *seem to come short*, Heb. iv. 1. Fear is a great guard and preservative from evil.

He urges this from the consideration of their readiness always to obey the gospel. *As ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence*, ver. 12. You have been always willing to comply with every discovery of the will of God; and that in my absence as well as presence. You make it appear that regard to Christ, and care of your souls, sway more with you, than any other respects whatsoever. They were not merely awed by the apostle's presence, but did it even *much more in his absence*. And because, *it is God who worketh in you*: Do you work out your salvation, for it is God who worketh in you: *Work*, for he *worketh*. It should encourage us to do our utmost, because our *labour shall not be in vain*. God is ready to concur with his grace, and assist our faithful endeavours. Observe, Though we must use our utmost endeavours in working out our salvation, yet still we must go forth, and go on in a dependence upon the grace of God. His grace worketh in us in a way suitable to our natures, and in concurrence with our endeavours; and the operations of God's grace in us are so far from excusing, that they are intended to quicken and engage our endeavours. And work out your salvation *with fear and trembling, for he worketh in you*. All our working depends upon his working in us. Do not trifle with God by neglects and delays, lest you provoke him to withdraw his help, and all your endeavours prove in vain. Work with *fear*, for he works of his *good pleasure*. *To will and to do*: He gives the whole ability. It is the grace of God which inclines the will to that which is good; and then enables us to perform it, and to act according to our principles. *Thou hast wrought all our works in us*, Isa. xxvi. 12. *Of his good pleasure*: As there is no strength in us, so there is no merit in us. As we cannot act without God's grace, so we cannot claim it, or pretend to deserve it. God's good will to us, is the cause of his good work in us; and he is under no engagements to his creatures, but those of his gracious promise.

14. Do all things without murmurings, and disputings: 15. That ye may be blameless, and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world: 16. Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain. 17. Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all. 18. For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me.

The apostle exhorts them in these verses to adorn their Christian profession by a suitable temper and behaviour, in several instances.

1. By a cheerful obedience to the commands of God, ver. 14. *Do all things*, i. e. Do your duty in every branch of it, *without murmurings*. Do it, and do not find fault with it. Mind your work, and do not quarrel with it. God's commands were given to be obeyed, not to be disputed. This greatly adorns our pro-

fession, and shews we serve a good master, whose service is freedom, and whose work is its own reward.

2. By peaceableness, and love one to another. Do all things *without disputings*, wrangling and debating one with another; because the light of truth, and the life of religion, is often lost in the heats and mists of disputation.

3. By a blameless conversation towards all men, ver. 15. *That ye may be blameless and harmless, the Sons of God without rebuke*. That you be not injurious to any in word or deed; and give no just occasion of offence. We should endeavour not only to be harmless, but to be blameless; not only not to do hurt, but not to come under the just suspicion of it. *Blameless and sincere*; so some read it. Blameless before men, sincere towards God. The *Sons of God*: It becomes them to be *blameless and harmless*, who stand in such a relation, and are favoured with such a privilege. The children of God should differ from the sons of men. *Without rebuke*, ἀμώμῃ. Momus was a carping deity among the Greeks, mentioned by Hesiod and Lucian, who did nothing himself, and found fault with every body, and every thing: From him all carpers at other men, and rigid censurers of their works, were called *Momi*. The sense of the expression is; walk so *circumspectly*, that Momus himself may have no occasion to cavil at you; that the severest censorer may find no fault with you. We should aim at it, and endeavour it, not only to get to heaven, but to get thither without a blot; and, like Demetrius, to *have a good report of all men, and of the truth*, 3 Joh. 12. *In the midst of a crooked and perverse generation*, i. e. among the heathens, and those who are *without*. Observe, Where there is no religion, little is to be expected but crookedness and perverseness; and the more crooked and perverse others are among whom we live, and the more apt to cavil, the more careful we should be to keep ourselves blameless and harmless. Abraham and Lot must not *strive, because the Canaanite and Perizzite dwell in the land*, Gen. xiii. 7. *Among whom ye shine as lights in the world*: Christ is the *light of the world*, and good Christians are lights in the world. When God raises up a good man in any place, he sets up a light in that place. Or, it may be read imperatively; *Among whom shine ye as lights*: compare Matth. v. 16. *Let your light so shine before men*. Christians should not only endeavour to approve themselves to God, but to recommend themselves to others, that *they also may glorify God*. They must shine as well as be sincere.

Holding forth the word of life, ver. 16. The gospel is called the *word of life*, because it reveals and proposes to us *eternal life* through Jesus Christ. *Life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel*, 2 Tim. i. 10. It is our duty not only to hold fast, but to hold forth the word of life; not only to hold it fast for our own benefit, but to hold it forth for the benefit of others; to hold it forth, as the candlestick holds forth the candle, which makes it appear to advantage all around: or as the luminaries of the heavens, which shed their influence far and wide. This Paul tells them would be his joy; *that I may rejoice in the day of Christ*. Not only rejoice in your steadfastness, but in your usefulness. He would have them think his pains well bestowed, and that *he had not run in vain, nor laboured in vain*.

Observe, (1.) The work of the ministry requires the putting forth of the whole man: All that is within us is little enough to be employed in it; as in running and labouring. Running, notes vehemence and vigour, and continual pressing forward; labouring, constancy and close application.

(2.) It is a great joy to ministers, when they perceive that they have not *run in vain, nor laboured in vain*; and it will be their rejoicing in the day of Christ, when their converts will be their crown. *What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy*, 1 Thess. ii. 19.

The apostle not only ran and laboured for them with satisfaction, but shews that he was ready to suffer for their good, ver. 17. *Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith; I joy and rejoice with you all*. He could reckon himself happy, if he could promote the honour of Christ, the edification of the church, and the welfare of the souls of men; though it were not only by hazarding, but by laying down his life. He could willingly be a sacrifice at their altars, to serve the faith of God's elect. Could Paul think it worth the while to shed his blood for the service of the church; and shall we think much to take a little pains? Is not that worth our labour, which he thought worth his life? *If I be offered, or poured out as the wine of the drink-offerings*, σπένδομαι, 2 Tim. iv. 6. *I am now ready to be offered*. He could rejoice to seal his doctrine with his blood, ver. 18. *For the same cause also do ye joy and rejoice with me*. It is the will of God that good Christians should be much in rejoicing; and they who are happy in good ministers, have a great deal of reason to joy and rejoice with them. If the minister loves the people, and is willing to *spend and be spent* for their welfare; the people have reason to love the minister, and to *joy and rejoice with him*.

19. But I trust in the Lord Jesus, to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort when

when I know your state. 20. For I have no man like-minded, who will naturally care for your state. 21. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christs. 22. But ye know the proof of him, that as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel. 23. Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me. 24. But I trust in the Lord, that I also myself shall come shortly. 25. Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and companion in labour, and fellow-soldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants. 26. For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick. 27. For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. 28. I sent him therefore the more carefully, that when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful. 29. Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such in reputation: 30. Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life to supply your lack of service towards me.

St. Paul takes particular notice of two good ministers; for though he was himself a great apostle, and *laboured more abundantly than they all*, yet he took all occasions to speak with respect of those who were far his inferiors.

(1.) He speaks of Timothy, whom he intended to send to the Philippians, that he might have an account of their *state*. See Paul's care of the churches, and the comfort he had in their well-doing. He was in pain when he had not heard of them a good while, and therefore would send Timothy to enquire, and bring him an account. *For I have no man like minded, who will naturally care for your state.* Timothy was a non-such. There were, no doubt, many good ministers, who were in care for the souls of those for whom they preached; but none comparable to Timothy: a man of an excellent spirit and tender heart; *who will naturally care for your state.* Observe, It is best with us, when our duty becomes in a manner natural to us. Timothy was a genuine son of blessed Paul, and *walked in the same spirit*, and the *same steps*. Naturally, i. e. sincerely, and not in pretence only: with a willing heart and upright view, so agreeably to the make of his mind. Note, 1. It is the duty of ministers to care for the state of their people, and be concerned for their welfare; *I seek not yours but you*, 2 Cor. xii. 14. 2. It is a rare thing to find one who doth it naturally: such a one is remarkable and distinguished among his brethren.

All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's, ver. 21. What did Paul say this in haste, as David said, *all men are liars*? Psal. cxviii. 11. Was there so general a corruption among ministers, so early, that there was not one among them who cared for the state of their people? We must not understand it so: he means the generality; *all*, i. e. either the most, or all in comparison of Timothy. Note, *Seeking our own interest with the neglect of Jesus Christ*, is a very great sin, and very common among Christians and ministers. We are apt to prefer our own credit, ease, and safety; before truth, holiness, and duty; the things of our own pleasure and reputation, before the things of Christ's kingdom, and his honour and interest in the world: but Timothy was none of those.

Ye know the proof of him, ver. 22. Timothy was a man who had been tried, and had made *full proof of his ministry*, 2 Tim. iv. 5. and was faithful in all which befel him. All the churches with whom he had acquaintance, knew the *proof* of him. He was a man as good as he seemed to be; and *served Christ so as to be acceptable to God*, and *approved of men*, Rom. xiv. 18. *q. d.* You do not only know the name of him, and the face of him, but the *proof* of him, and have experienced his affection and fidelity in your service: *That as a son with a father, he hath served me in the gospel.* He was Paul's assistant in many places where he preached, and served with him in the gospel, with all the dutiful respect which a child pays to a father; and with all the love and cheerfulness, with which a child is serviceable to his father. Their ministrations together were with great respect on the one side, and great tenderness and kindness on the other. An admirable example to elder and younger ministers, joined together in the same service.

Paul designed to send him shortly; *Him therefore I hope to send presently, as soon as I shall see how it will go with me*, ver. 23. He was now a prisoner, and did not know what would be the issue; but according as it turned, he would dispose of Timothy. Nay, he hoped to come himself, ver. 24. *But I trust in the Lord, that I also myself shall come shortly.* He hoped he should soon be set at liberty, and be able to give them a visit. Paul desired his liberty, not that he might take his pleasure, but that he might do good. *I trust in the Lord.* He expresses his hope and confidence of seeing them, with an humble dependence and

submission to the divine will, 1 Cor. iv. 19. *But I will come to you shortly if the Lord will*, Jam. iv. 15. *For that you ought to say, if the Lord will we shall live, or do this and that*; so Acts xviii. 21. and Heb. vi. 3.

(2.) Concerning Epaphroditus, whom he calls *his brother and companion in labour, and fellow-soldier*, i. e. his Christian brother to whom he bore a tender affection; and his companion in the work and sufferings of the gospel; who submitted to the same labours and hardships with himself: and their messenger, i. e. one who was sent by them to him; probably to consult him about some affairs relating to the church, or to bring a present from them for his relief; for he adds, and *he who ministered to my wants*. He seems to be the same who is elsewhere called Epaphras, Coloss. iv. 12. He had an earnest desire to come to them, and Paul was willing he should. It seems,

1. Epaphroditus had been sick. *They had heard that he had been sick*, ver. 26. And, *indeed he was sick nigh unto death*, ver. 27. Sickness is a calamity common to men, to good men and ministers. But why did not the apostle heal him, who was endued with a power of curing diseases as well as raising the dead? Acts xx. 10. Probably because that was intended as a sign to others, and to confirm the truth of the gospel, and therefore need not be exercised one towards another: *These signs shall follow them who believe; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover*, Mark xvi. 17, 18. And perhaps, they had not that power at all times, and at their own discretion, but only when some great end was to be served by it, and when God saw fit. It was proper to Christ, who had *the Spirit above measure*.

2. The Philippians were exceeding sorry to hear of his sickness. They were *full of heaviness* as well as he, upon the tidings of it: For he was one, it seems, they had a particular respect and affection for, and thought fit to chuse out to send to the apostle.

3. It pleased God to recover and spare him; *but God had mercy on him*, ver. 27. The apostle owns it as a great mercy to himself, as well as to Epaphroditus and others: Though the church was blessed at that time with extraordinary gifts, they could even then ill spare a good minister. He was sensibly touched with the thoughts of so great a loss; *Lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow*, i. e. Besides the sorrow of my own imprisonment, I should have the sorrow of his death. Or perhaps some other good ministers had died lately, which had been a great affliction to him; and if this had died now, it would have been a fresh grief to him, and *sorrow added to sorrow*.

4. Epaphroditus was willing to make a visit to the Philippians, that he might be comforted with those who had sorrowed for him when he was sick. *That when ye see him again, ye may rejoice*, ver. 28. That you may yourselves see how well he is recovered, and what reason you have of thankfulness and joy upon his account. He gave himself the pleasure of comforting them by the sight of so dear a friend.

5. Paul recommends him to their esteem and affection: *Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such in reputation*: account such men valuable who are zealous and faithful, and let them be highly loved and regarded. Shew your joy and respect by all the expressions of hearty affection and good opinion. It seems he had caught his illness in the work of God: *It was for the work of Christ that he was nigh to death, and to supply their lack of service to him.* The apostle does not blame him for his indiscretion in hazarding his life, but reckons they ought to love him the more upon that account. Observe, (1.) They who truly love Christ, and are hearty in the interests of his kingdom, will think it very well worth their while to hazard their health and life, to do him service, and promote the edification of his church. Observe, (2.) They were to receive him with joy as newly recovered from sickness. It is an endearing consideration to have our mercies restored to us after danger of removal; and should make them the more valued and improved. What is given us in answer to prayer, should be received with great thankfulness and joy.

CHAP. III.

He cautions them against Judaizing seducers, ver. 1—4. *Proposes his own example; and here he enumerates the privileges of his Jewish state which he rejected*, ver. 4—8. *And he describes the matter of his own choice*, ver. 9—14. *And closes with an exhortation to beware of wicked men, and to follow his example*, ver. 17—21.

1. **F**INALLY, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe. 2. Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision. 3. For we are the circumcision which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh:

It seems the church of the Philippians, though a faithful and flourishing church, was disturbed by the Judaizing teachers, who endeavoured

endeavoured to keep up the law of Moses, and mix the observances of it with the doctrine of Christ, and his institutions. He begins the chapter with warnings against these seducers.

1. He exhorts them to *rejoice in the Lord*, ver. 1. to rest satisfied in the interest they had in him, and the benefit they hoped for by him. It is the character and temper of sincere Christians to *rejoice in Christ Jesus*. The more we take of the comfort of our religion, the more closely we shall cleave to it: The more we rejoice in Christ, the more willing we shall be to do and suffer for him; and the less danger we shall be in of being drawn away from him. *The joy of the Lord is our strength*, Neh. viii. 9.

2. He cautions them to take heed of those *false teachers*: *To write the same thing to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe*, i. e. the same things which I have already preached to you, q. d. what has been presented to your ears, shall be presented to your eyes: what I have spoken formerly shall now be written; to shew that I am still of the same mind. *To me indeed is not grievous*. Observe, 1. Ministers must not think any thing grievous to themselves, which they have reason to believe is safe and edifying to the people. Observe, 2. It is good for us often to hear the same truths, to revive the remembrance, and strengthen the impression of things of importance. It is a wanton curiosity to desire always to hear some new thing.

It is a needful caution he here gives, *Beware of dogs*, ver. 2. The prophet calls the false prophets *dumb dogs*, Isa. lvi. 10. to which the apostle here seems to refer. *Dogs*, for their malice against the faithful professors of the gospel of Christ, barking at them and biting them. They cried up *good works* in opposition to the *faith* of Christ; but Paul calls them *evil workers*: They boasted themselves to be of the *circumcision*; but he calls them the *circision*: they rent and tore the church of Christ, and cut it to pieces; or contended for an abolished rite, a mere insignificant cutting the flesh.

3. He describes true Christians, who are indeed the *circumcision*, the spiritual circumcision, i. e. the peculiar people of God, who are in covenant with him, as the Old Testament Israelites were. *We are the circumcision, who worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh*. Here are three characters: (1.) They worshipped in the spirit, in opposition to the carnal ordinances of the Old Testament, which consisted in meats, and drinks, and divers washings, &c. Christianity takes us off from these things, and teaches us to be inward with God in all the duties of religious worship. We must *worship God in spirit*, John iv. 24. The work of religion is to no purpose, any further than the heart is employed in it: *Whatsoever we do, we must do it heartily as unto the Lord*; and we must worship God in the strength and grace of the divine Spirit, which is so peculiar to the gospel-state, which is the *ministration of the Spirit*, 2 Cor. iii. 8. (2.) They rejoice in Christ Jesus, and not in the peculiar privileges of the Jewish church, or what answers to them in the Christian church; mere outward enjoyments and performances. They rejoice in their relation to Christ, and interest in him. God made it the duty of the Israelites to *rejoice before him in the courts of his house*; but now the *substance* is come, the *shadows* are done away, and we are to *rejoice in Christ Jesus only*. (3.) They have no confidence in the *flesh*, i. e. those carnal ordinances and outward performances. We must be taken off from trusting in our own bottom, that we may build only on Jesus Christ the everlasting foundation: Our confidence as well as our joy is proper to him.

4. Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: 5. Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; 6. Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. 7. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. 8. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ.

The apostle here proposeth himself for an example of trusting in Christ only, and not in his privileges as an Israelite.

1. He shews what he had to boast of as a Jew and a Pharisee. Let none think that the apostle despised these things, as men commonly do, because he had them not himself to glory in: No, if he would have gloried and trusted in the flesh, he had as much cause to do so as any man. *If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof to trust in the flesh, I more*, ver. 4. He had as much to boast of as any Jew of them all. (1.) His birth-right privileges. He was was not a proselyte, but a native Israelite; of the stock of Israel. And he was of the tribe of Benjamin, in which tribe the temple stood, and which adhered to Judea when all the other tribes revolted. Benjamin was the father's darling, and this was a favoured tribe. *A Hebrew of the Hebrews*, i. e. No. cxi.

an Israelite on both sides, by father and mother, and from one generation to another; none of his ancestors had matched with Gentiles. (2.) He could boast of his relation to the church and the covenant, for he was *circumcised the eighth day*; he had the token of God's covenant in his flesh, and was circumcised the very day which God had appointed. (3.) For learning, he was a Pharisee, brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, an eminent doctor of the law; and was a scholar learned in all the learning of the Jews; taught according to the *perfect manner* of the laws of the fathers, Acts xxiii. 3. He was a *Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee*, Acts xxiii. 6. and *after the most strict sect of his religion, lived a Pharisee*, Acts xxvi. 5. (4.) He had a blameless conversation; *touching the righteousness which is of the law blameless*: As far as the Pharisees exposition of the law went, and as to the mere letter of the law, and outward observance of it, he could acquit himself from the breach of it, and could not be accused by any. (5.) He had been an active man for his religion. As he made a strict profession of it under the title and character of a Pharisee, so he persecuted those whom he looked upon as enemies to it. *Concerning zeal, persecuting the church*. (6.) He shewed that he was in good earnest, though he had a *zeal without knowledge*, to direct and govern the exercise of it. *I was zealous towards God, as ye all are this day, and I persecuted this way unto the death*, Acts xxii. 3, 4. All this was enough to have made a proud Jew confident, and was stock sufficient to set up with for his justification. But,

2. The apostle tells us here how little account he made of these in comparison of his interest in Christ, and his expectations from him. *But what things were gain to me, those have I counted loss for Christ*, ver. 7. i. e. those things which he had counted gain while he was a Pharisee, and which he had before reckoned up, *those I counted loss for Christ*. I could have reckoned myself an unspeakable loser, if to adhere to them, I had lost my interest in Jesus Christ. He counted them loss; not only insufficient to enrich him, but what would certainly impoverish and ruin him, if he trusted to them in opposition to Christ. Observe, the apostle did not persuade them to do any thing, but what he himself did; to quit any thing but what he had quitted himself; or venture on any other bottom, but what he himself had ventured his immortal soul upon.

Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, ver. 8. Here the apostle explains himself.

(1.) He tells us what it was he was ambitious of, and reached after. It was the *knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord*: a believing, experimental acquaintance with Christ as Lord; not a mere notional and speculative, but a practical and efficacious knowledge of him. So knowledge is sometimes put for faith: *By his knowledge, or the knowledge of him, shall my righteous servant justify many*, Isa. liii. 11. And it is the excellency of knowledge. There is an abundant and transcendent excellence in the doctrine of Christ, or the Christian religion, above all the knowledge of nature, and improvements of human wisdom; for it is suited to the case of fallen sinners, and furnishes them with all they need, and all they can desire and hope for, with all saving wisdom, and saving grace.

(2.) He shews how he had quitted his privileges, as a Jew and a Pharisee. *Yea doubtless*; his expression rises with an holy triumph and elevation, ἀλλὰ μὲν ἔν γε ὧ. There are five particles in the original: *But indeed even also do I count all things but loss*. He had spoke before of *those things*; his Jewish privileges: Here he speaks of *all things*; all worldly enjoyments, and mere outward privileges whatsoever, things of a like kind, or any other kind, which could stand in competition with Christ for the throne in his heart, or pretend to merit and desert. There he had said he *did* count them but loss, but it might be asked, Did he continue still in the same mind, did he not repent his renouncing them? No, now he speaks in the present tense: *Yea doubtless, I do count them but loss*. But it may be said, it is easy to say so, but what would he do when he came to the trial? Why he tells us, that he had himself practised according to this estimate of the case: *For whom I have suffered the loss of all things*. He had quitted all his honours and advantages, as a Jew and a Pharisee, and submitted to all the disgrace and suffering which attended the profession and preaching of the gospel. When he embarked in the bottom of the Christian religion, he ventured all in it, and suffered the loss of all, for the privileges of a Christian. Nay, he not only counted them loss, but dung, σκύβαλον; *offals* thrown to dogs; they are not only less valuable than Christ, but, in the highest degree, contemptible, when they come in competition with him.

Note, The New Testament never speaks of *saving grace*, in any terms of diminution, but, on the contrary, represents it as the *fruits* of the divine Spirit, and the *image of God* in the soul of man; as a *divine nature*, and the *seed of God*: and faith is called *precious faith*; and *meekness* is in the *sight of God of great price*, 1 Pet. iii. 4. 2 Pet. i. 1, &c.

9. And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by

by faith: 10. That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; 11. If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead: 12. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. 13. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but *this one thing I do*, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, 14. I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

We have heard what the apostle renounced, let us now see what he laid hold on, and resolved to cleave to, and that was, 1st, Christ; and, 2^{dly}, Heaven. He had his heart on these two great peculiarities of the Christian religion.

1. The apostle had his heart upon Christ, as his *righteousness*. This is illustrated in several instances.

(1.) He desired to *win* Christ; and an unspeakable gainer he would reckon himself, if he had but an interest in Christ and his righteousness, and he became his Lord and his Saviour. That I *may win him*; as the runner wins the prize, as the sailor makes the port he is bound for. The expression intimates, that we have need to strive for him, and reach after him; and that all is little enough to win him.

(2.) That he *might be found in him*, ver. 9. As the *man-slayer* was found in the *city of refuge*, where he was safe from the *avenger* of blood, Numb. xxxvi. 5. Or it alludes to a judicial appearance; so we are to be *found of our judge in peace*, 2 Pet. iii. 14. We are undone without a righteousness wherein to appear before God, for we are guilty. There is a righteousness provided for us in Jesus Christ, and it is a complete and perfect righteousness. None can have interest or benefit by it, but those who come off from confidence in themselves, and are brought heartily to believe in him. *Not having my own righteousness which is of the law*, i. e. Not thinking that my outward observances, and good deeds, are able to atone for my bad ones; or that by setting the one over-against the other, I can come to balance accounts with God. No, the righteousness which I depend upon is, that *which is through the faith of Christ*; not a legal, but evangelical righteousness. *The righteousness which is of God by faith*, i. e. ordained and appointed of God. The Lord Jesus Christ is the *Lord our righteousness*, Isa. xlv. 24. Had he not been God, he could not have been *our righteousness*; the transcendent excellence of the divine nature, put such a value upon, and such a virtue into, his sufferings, that they became sufficient to satisfy for the sins of the world, and to bring in a righteousness which will be effectual to all who believe. And faith is the ordained means of actual interest, and saving benefit in all the purchase of his blood. It is *by faith in his blood*, Rom. iii. 25.

(3.) That he might *know* Christ, ver. 10. *That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings*. Faith is called *knowledge*, Isa. liii. 11. *Knowing him here, is believing in him*. It is an *experimental* knowledge of the *power of his resurrection, and fellowship of his suffering*, or feeling the transforming efficacy and virtue of them. Observe, The apostle was as ambitious of being sanctified, as he was of being justified. He was as desirous to know the power of Christ's death and resurrection killing sin in him, and raising him up to newness of life, as he was to receive the benefit of Christ's death and resurrection in his justification.

(4.) That he might *be conformable unto him*; and that also is meant of his sanctification. We are then made conformable to his death, when we die to sin, as Christ died for sin; when we are *crucified with Christ*, the *flesh and affections* of it mortified, and the *world is crucified to us*, and *we to the world, by the virtue of the cross of Christ*. This is our conformity to his death.

2. The apostle had his heart upon heaven, as his happiness: *If by any means I might attain to the resurrection of the dead*, ver. 11. The happiness of heaven is here called the *resurrection of the dead*, because, though the souls of the faithful when they depart, are immediately with Christ, yet their happiness will not be complete till the general *resurrection* of the dead at the last day, when soul and body shall be glorified together. *Ανάστασις*, sometimes signifies the future state. This the apostle had his eye upon, this he would attain. There will be a resurrection of the unjust, who shall arise to *shame and everlasting contempt*; and our care must be to escape that: but the *joyful and glorious* resurrection of saints is called *the resurrection*, κατ' ἐξοχὴν, because it is in virtue of Christ's resurrection, as their head and first fruits; whereas the wicked shall rise only by the power of Christ, as their judge. To the saints it will be indeed a resurrection, i. e. a return to bliss, and life, and glory; but the resurrection of the wicked is a rising from the grave, but a return to a *second death*. It is called *the resurrection of the just*, and *the resurrection of life*, John v. 29. and they are *counted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead*, Luke xx. 35.

This joyful resurrection the apostle pressed towards. He was willing to do any thing, suffer any thing, that he might attain that resurrection. The hope and prospect of it carried him with so much courage and constancy through all the difficulties he met with in his work. Observe, 1. He speaks as if they were in danger of missing it, and coming short of it: A holy fear of coming short, is an excellent means of perseverance. Observe, 2. His care to be found in Christ, was in order to his attaining the resurrection of the dead. Paul himself did not hope to attain it through his own merit and righteousness, but through the merit and righteousness of Jesus Christ. Let me be *found in Christ*, that I may attain the *resurrection of the dead*; that is, found a believer in him, and interested in him by faith.

He looks upon himself to be in a state of imperfection and trial. *Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect*, ver. 12. Observe, The best men in the world will readily own their imperfection in the present state. We have not yet attained, are not already perfect; there is still much wanting in all our duties, and graces, and comforts. If Paul had not attained to perfection, who had reached to so high a pitch of holiness, much less have we. Again, *Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended*, ver. 13. ἐλογίζομαι, I make this judgment of the case; I thus reason with myself. Observe, They who think they have grace enough, it is a sign they have little enough, and that they have none at all; because wherever there is true grace, there is a desire of more grace, and a pressing towards the perfection of grace. Observe here,

(1.) What the apostle's actings were under this conviction: Considering that he had not already attained, and had not apprehended, he pressed forward: *I follow after*, ver. 12. διώκω. I pursue with vigour, as one following after the game. I endeavour to get more grace, and do more good; and never think I have done enough. *If that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus*. Observe, 1. From whence our grace comes; from our being *apprehended* of Christ Jesus. It is not our laying hold of Christ first, but his laying hold of us, which is our happiness and salvation: *We love him, because he first loved us*, 1 John iv. 19. Nor our keeping hold of Christ, but his keeping hold of us, which is our safety. We are *kept by his mighty power through faith unto salvation*, 1 Pet. i. 5. Observe, 2. What the happiness of heaven is: It is *to apprehend that for which we are apprehended of Christ*. When Christ laid hold of us, it was to bring us to heaven; and to apprehend that for which he apprehended us, is to attain the perfection of our bliss.

He adds further, ver. 13. *This one thing I do*; this was his great care and concern: *Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before*. There is a sinful forgetting of past sins and past mercies, which ought to be remembered for the exercise of constant repentance, and thankfulness to God. But he *forgot the things which are behind*, so as not to be content with present measures of grace: He was still for having more and more. So he *reached forth*, ἐπέκλεινεν; stretched himself forwards, bearing towards his point: Expressions of a vehement concern.

(2.) The apostle's aim in these actings. *I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*, ver. 14. He *pressed towards the mark*. As he who runs a race never takes up short of the end, but is still making forward as fast as he can; so they who have heaven in their eye, must still be pressing forward to it in holy desires and hopes, and constant endeavours and preparations. The fitter we grow for heaven, the faster we must press towards it. Heaven is called here the *mark*, because it is that which every good Christian hath in his eye; as the archer has his eye fixed upon the mark he designs to hit. *For the prize of the high calling*. Observe, That a Christian's calling is an *high calling*: It is *from* heaven, as its *original*; and it is *to* heaven in its *tendency*. Heaven is the *prize of the high calling*; τὸ βεζέειον, the prize we fight for, and run for, and wrestle for, what we aim at in all we do, and will reward all our pains. It is of great use in the Christian course to keep our eye upon heaven. This is proper to give us measures in all our service, and to quicken us every step we take; and it is *of God*, from him we are to expect it. *Eternal life is the gift of God*, Rom. vi. ult. but it is *in Christ Jesus*, through his hand it must come to us, as it is procured for us by him. There is no getting to heaven as our home, but by Christ as our way.

15. Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. 16. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.

The apostle having proposed himself as an example, he urges the Philippians to follow it. Let the same mind be in us which was in blessed Paul. We see here, how he was minded; let us be *like-minded*, and set our hearts upon Christ and heaven, as he did.

1. He shews that this was the thing wherein all good Christians were agreed; to make Christ *all in all*, and set their hearts upon another

another world. This is that *whereto we have all attained*. However good Christians may differ in their sentiments about other things, this is what they are agreed in, that Christ is a Christian's all; that to *win* Christ, and be *found* in him, is our happiness, both here and hereafter: And therefore, *let us walk by the same rule, and mind the same thing*. Having made Christ our all to us, *to us to live must be Christ*. Let us agree to *press towards the mark*, and make heaven our end.

2. That this is a good reason why Christians who differ in lesser matters, should yet bear with one another, because they are agreed in the main matter. *If in any thing you be otherwise minded: If you differ from one another, and are not of the same judgment as to meats, and days, and other matters of the Jewish law; yet you must not judge one another, while you all meet now in Christ as your center, and hope to meet shortly in heaven as your home. As for other matters of difference, lay no great stress upon them; God shall reveal even this unto you. Whatever it is wherein you differ, you must wait till God give you a better understanding, which he will do in his due time. In the mean time, as far as we have attained, we must go together in the ways of God, join together in all the great things in which you are agreed, and wait for further light in the lesser things wherein you differ.*

17. Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so, as ye have us for an ensample. 18. (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ*: 19. Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly: and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.) 20. For our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: 21. Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

He closes the chapter with warnings and exhortations.

1. He warns them against following the examples of seducers and evil teachers, *ver. 18, 19. Many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ*. Observe, There are many called by Christ's name, who yet are enemies to Christ's cross, and the design and intention of it. Their walk is a surer evidence what they are, than their profession: *By their fruits you shall know them*, Matt. vii. 20. The apostle warns people against such. (1.) Very frequently: *I have told you often*. We so little heed the warnings given us, that we have need to have them repeated: *To write the same things is safe*, *ver. 1*. (2.) Feelingly and affectionately: *I now tell you weeping*. Paul was upon proper occasions, a *weeping preacher*, as Jeremiah was a *weeping prophet*. Observe, That an old sermon may be preached with new affections; what we say often we may say again, if we say it affectionately, and are ourselves under the power of it. He gives us the characters of those who were the *enemies* of the cross of Christ.

(1.) *Whose God is their belly*, i. e. They mind nothing but their sensual appetites. A wretched idol it is, and a scandal for any, but especially for Christians, to sacrifice the favour of God, the peace of their conscience, and their eternal happiness to it. Gluttons and drunkards make a god of their belly, and all their care is to please it, and make provision for it. The same observance which good people give to God, epicures give to their appetites. Of such he says, *They serve not the Lord Jesus Christ, but their own bellies*, Rom. xvi. 18.

(2.) *They glory in their shame*: They not only sin, but brag of it, and glory in that which they ought to be ashamed of. Sin is the sinner's shame, especially when it is gloried in. They value themselves for what is their blemish and reproach.

(3.) *They mind earthly things*: Christ came by his cross to *crucify the world to us, and us to the world*; and they who mind earthly things, act directly contrary to the cross of Christ, and this great design of it. They relish earthly things, and have no relish of the things which are spiritual and heavenly; they set their *hearts and affections* on earthly things; they love them, and even dote upon them, and have a confidence and complacency in them. He gives them this character, to shew how absurd it would be for Christians to follow the example of such, or be led away by them. And to deter us all from it, he reads their doom:

(4.) *Whose end is destruction*. Their way seems pleasant, but death and hell are at the end of it: *What fruit had you then in those things whereof you are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death*, Rom. vi. 21. It is dangerous following them, though it is going down the stream; for if we chuse their way, we have reason to fear their end. Perhaps he alludes to the total destruction of the Jewish nation.

2. He proposeth himself and his brethren for an example, in opposition to these evil examples. *Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them who walk, as you have us for an ex-*

ample, *ver. 17*. Mark them out for your *pattern*. He explains himself, *ver. 20*. by their regard to Christ and heaven: *For our conversation is in heaven*. Observe, Good Christians, even while they are here on earth, have their *conversation* in heaven. Their *citizenship* is there, *πολίτευμα*, q. d. We stand related to that world, and are *citizens* of the *New Jerusalem*. This world is not our home, but that is. There our greatest privileges and concerns lie. And because our citizenship is there, our conversation is there; being related to that world, we keep up a correspondence with it. The life of a Christian is in heaven, where his head is, and his home is, and where he hopes to be shortly: He *sets his affections upon things above*; and where *his heart is*, there will his *conversation* be.

The apostle had pressed them to follow him, and other ministers of Christ: Why, might they say, *you are a company of poor, despised, persecuted people; who make no figure, and pretend to no advantages in the world; who will follow you?* Nay, saith he, but our *conversation is in heaven*. We have a near relation, and a great pretension to the other world; and are not so mean and despicable as we are represented. It is good having fellowship with those who have fellowship with Christ, and conversation with those whose *conversation is in heaven*.

(1.) Because we look for the Saviour from thence, *ver. 20. From whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ*. He is not here, he is ascended, he is *entered within the veil* for us; and we expect his second coming from thence, to gather in all the citizens of that *New Jerusalem* to himself.

(2.) Because at the second coming of Christ we expect to be happy and glorified there. There is good reason to have our conversation in heaven, not only because Christ is now there, but because we hope to be there shortly. *Who shall change our vile bodies, that they may be fashioned like unto his glorious body*, *ver. 21*. There is a glory reserved for the bodies of the saints, which they will be instated in at the resurrection. The body is now at the best a *vile body*, *τὸ σῶμα τῆς ταπείνωσεως ἡμῶν*, the *body of our humiliation*: It hath its rise and original from the earth, it is supported out of the earth, and is subject to many diseases, and to death at last. Besides, it is often the occasion and instrument of much sin, which is called the *body of this death*, Rom. vii. 24.

Or it may be understood of its vileness when it lies in the grave; at the resurrection it will be found a *vile body*, resolved to rottenness and dust; the *dust will return to the earth as it was*, Eccl. xii. 7. But it will be made a *glorious body*; and not only raised again to life, but raised to great advantage. Observe, (1.) The *sample* of this change, and that is the *glorious body* of Christ, who, when he was transfigured upon the mount, *his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light*, Matth. xvii. 2. He went to heaven clothed with a body, that he might take possession of the inheritance in our nature, and be not only the *first-born from the dead*, but the *first-born* of the *children of the resurrection*. We shall be *conformed to the image of his Son*, that he might be the *first-born among many brethren*, Rom. viii. 29. Observe, (2.) The power by which this change will be wrought: *According to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself*. There is an efficacy of power; an exceeding greatness of power, and the working of mighty power, Eph. i. 19. It is matter of comfort to us, that he can *subdue all things to himself*; and sooner or later will bring over all into his interest. And the resurrection will be wrought by this power: *I will raise him up at the last day*, John vi. 4. Let this confirm our faith of the resurrection, that we not only have the scriptures, which assure us it shall be, but we *know the power of God* which can effect it, *Matth. xxii. 29*. As Christ's resurrection was a glorious instance of the divine power, and therefore *he is declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead*, Rom. i. 4. so will our resurrection be; and his resurrection is a standing evidence as well as pattern of ours. And then all the enemies of the Redeemer's kingdom will be completely conquered: Not only he *who had the power of death*, that is, the devil, Heb. ii. 14. But the *last enemy shall be destroyed*, that is, death, 1 Cor. xv. 26. *Death will be swallowed up in victory*, *ver. 54*.

CHAP. IV.

Exhortations to several Christian duties, as steadfastness, unanimity, joy, &c. ver. 1—9. The apostle's grateful acknowledgments of the Philippians kindness to him, with expressions of his own content, and desire of their good, ver. 10—20. He concludes the epistle with praise, salutations, and blessing, ver. 21—23.

1. **T**HEREFORE, my brethren, dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, *my dearly beloved*. 2. I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord. 3. And I intreat thee also, true yoke-fellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellow-labourers, whose names are in the book

book of life. 4. Rejoyce in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoyce. 5. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. 6. Be careful for nothing: but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. 7. And the peace of God which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. 8. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. 9. Those things which ye have both learned and received, and heard and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

The apostle begins the chapter with exhortations to divers Christian duties.

1. To steadfastness in our Christian profession, *ver. 1.* It is inferred from the close of the foregoing chapter; *Therefore stand fast, &c.* Seeing our conversation is in heaven, and we look for the Saviour to come from thence, and fetch us thither; *therefore let us stand fast.* Note, The believing hope and prospect of eternal life should engage us to be steady, and even, and constant in our Christian course. Observe here,

(1.) The compellations are very endearing: *My brethren, dearly beloved, and longed for, my joy and crown;* and again, *My dearly beloved.* Thus he expresses the pleasure he took in them, the kindness he had for them, to convey his exhortations to them with so much the greater advantage. He looked upon them as his brethren, though he was a great apostle. *All we are brethren.* There is difference of gifts, graces, and attainments, yet being renewed by the same Spirit, after the same image, we are brethren; as the children of the same parents, though of different ages, statures, and complexions. Being brethren, (1.) He loved them, and loved them dearly; *dearly beloved;* and again, *My dearly beloved.* Warm affections become ministers and Christians towards one another. Brotherly love must always go along with the brotherly relation. (2.) He loved them, and longed for them; longed to see them, and hear from them; longed for their welfare, and was earnestly desirous of it. *I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ,* chap. i. 8. (3.) He loved them, and rejoiced in them. They were his joy; he had no greater joy than to hear of their spiritual health and prosperity. *I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in the truth,* 2 John 4. 3 John 4. (4.) He loved them, and gloried in them: They were his crown, as well as his joy. Never was proud ambitious man more pleased with the ensigns of honour, than Paul was with the evidences of the sincerity of their faith and obedience. All this is to prepare his way to greater regard.

(2.) The exhortation itself: *So stand fast in the Lord.* Being in Christ, they must stand fast in him, i. e. even and steady in their walk with him, and close and constant unto the end. Or, to stand fast in the Lord, is to stand fast in his strength, and by his grace; not trusting in ourselves, and disclaiming any sufficiency of our own; we must be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, Eph. vi. 10. *So stand fast; so as you have done hitherto; stand fast unto the end; so as you are my beloved, and my joy, and crown; so stand fast, as those in whose welfare and perseverance I am so nearly interested and concerned.*

2. He exhorts them to unanimity and mutual assistance, *ver. 2, 3.* *I beseech Euodias and Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord.* This is directed to some particular persons. Sometimes there is need of applying the general precepts of the gospel to particular persons and cases. Euodias and Syntyche, it seems, were at variance, either one with the other, or with the church; either upon a civil account, it may be they were engaged in a law-suit; or upon a religious account, it may be they were of different opinions and sentiments. Pray, saith he, desire them from me to be of the same mind in the Lord, i. e. That they will keep the peace, and live in love; be of the same mind one with another, not thwarting and contradicting; and that they be of the same mind with the rest of the church, not acting in opposition to them.

Then he exhorts to mutual assistance, *ver. 3.* and that he directs to particular persons: *I intreat thee also, true yoke-fellow.* Who this person was he calls true yoke-fellow, is uncertain. Some think Epaphroditus, who is supposed to be one of the pastors of the church of the Philippians. Others think it was some eminent good woman, perhaps Paul's wife, because he exhorts his yoke-fellow to help the women which laboured with him. Whoever was the yoke-fellow with the apostle, must be a yoke-fellow too with his friends. It seems there were women who laboured with Paul in the gospel; not in the publick ministry, for the apostle expressly forbids that, 1 Tim. ii. 12. *I suffer not a woman to teach;* but by entertaining the ministers, visiting the sick, instructing the ignorant, convincing the erroneous. Thus women

may be helpful to ministers in the work of the gospel. Now, says the apostle, *do thou help them.* They who help others, should be helped themselves, when there is occasion. *Help them,* i. e. join with them, strengthen their hands, encourage them in their difficulties.

With Clement also, and other my fellow-labourers. Paul had a kindness for all his fellow-labourers; and as he had found the benefit of their assistance, he concluded how comfortable it would be to them to have the assistance of others. Of his fellow-labourers he saith, *Whose names are in the book of life,* i. e. either they were chosen of God from all eternity; or registered and enrolled in the corporation and society to which the privilege of eternal life belongs; alluding to the custom among the Jews and Gentiles, of registering the inhabitants, or the freemen of a city. So we read of their names being written in heaven, Luke x. 21. and not blotting his name out of the book of life, Rev. iii. 5. and of them who are written in the Lamb's book of life, Rev. xxi. 27. Observe, There is a book of life; there are names in that book, and not characters and conditions only. We cannot search into that book, or know whose names are written there, but we may in a judgment of charity conclude, that they who labour in the gospel, and are faithful to the interest of Christ and souls, have their names in the book of life.

3. He exhorts to holy joy and delight in God: *Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice,* *ver. 4.* All our joy must terminate in God; and our thoughts of God must be delightful thoughts. *Delight thyself in the Lord,* Psal. xxxvii. 4. and in the multitude of our thoughts within us (grievous and afflicting thoughts) his comforts delight our souls, Psal. xciv. 19. and our meditation of him is sweet, Psal. civ. 34. Observe, It is our duty and privilege to rejoice in God, and to rejoice in him always; at all times, in all conditions; even when we suffer for him, or are afflicted by him. We must not think the worse of him or of his ways, for the hardships we meet with in his service. There is enough in God to furnish us with matter of joy in the worst circumstance on earth. He had said it before; chap. iii. 1. *Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord:* Here he saith it again, *Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice.* Joy in God is a duty of great consequence in the Christian life; and Christians need to be again and again called to it. If good men have not a continual feast, it is their own fault.

4. We are here exhorted to candor and gentleness, and good temper towards our brethren: *Let your moderation be known to all men,* *ver. 5.* i. e. In things indifferent do not run into extremes; avoid bigotry and animosity; judge charitably concerning one another. The word, τὸ ἐπιεικὲς, signifies a good disposition towards other men: and this moderation is explained, Rom. xiv. Some understand it of patient bearing afflictions, or sober enjoyment of worldly good; and so it well agrees with the following verse. The reason is, *the Lord is at hand.* The consideration of our Master's approach, and our final account, should keep us from smiting our fellow-servants, support us under present sufferings, and moderate our affections to outward good. He will take vengeance on your enemies, and reward your patience.

5. Here is a caution against disquieting, perplexing care. *Ver. 6.* *Be careful for nothing;* μὴ εἰν μεινῶντες; the same expression with that, Matt. vi. 25. *Take no thought for your life,* i. e. anxious care and distracting thought in the wants and difficulties of life. Observe, That it is the duty and interest of Christians to live without care. There is a care of diligence, which is our duty, and consists in a wise forecast and due concern; but there is a care of diffidence and distrust, which is our sin and folly, and which only perplexes and distracts the mind. *Be careful for nothing,* so as by your care to distrust God, and unfit yourselves for his service.

6. As a sovereign antidote against perplexing care, he recommends to us constant prayer; in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. Observe, 1. We must not only keep up stated times for prayer, but we must pray upon every particular emergence. *In every thing by prayer.* When any thing burdens our spirits, we must ease our minds by prayer; when our affairs are perplexed or distressed, we must seek direction and support. 2. We must join thanksgiving with our prayers and supplications; we must not only seek supplies of good, but own receipts of mercy. Grateful acknowledgments of what we have, argue a right disposition of mind, and are prevailing motives for further blessings. 3. Prayer is offering up our desires to God, or making them known to him: *Let your requests be made known to God.* Not that God needs to be told either our wants, or desires; for he knows them better than we can tell him: but he will know them from us, and have us shew our regards and concern; express our value of the mercy, and sense of our dependence on him. 4. The effect of this will be the peace of God keeping our hearts, *ver. 7.* The peace of God, i. e. The comfortable sense of our reconciliation to God, and interest in his favour, and the hope of the heavenly blessedness, and enjoyment of God hereafter, which passeth all understanding; is a greater good than can be sufficiently valued, or duly expressed: *It hath not entered into the heart of man,* 1 Cor. ii. 9. This peace will keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus, i. e. keep them from sinning under your troubles, and from sinking under them; keep

keep them calm and sedate, without discomposure of passion, and with inward satisfaction. *Thou shalt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is staid on thee*, Isa. xxvi. 3.

7. We are exhorted to get and keep a *good name*; a name for good things with God and good men. *Whatsoever things are true and honest*, ver. 8. A regard to truth in our words and engagements, and to decency and becomingness in our behaviour, suitable to our circumstance and condition of life. *Whatsoever things are just and pure*: agreeable to the rules of justice and righteousness in all our dealings with men; and without the impurity or mixture of sin. *Whatsoever things are lovely and of good report*, i. e. amiable, and will render us beloved; and will make us well spoken of, as well as well thought of by others. *If there is any virtue, if there is any praise*; any thing really virtuous in any kind, and worthy of commendation. Observe, 1. The apostle would have the Christians learn any thing which was good of their heathen neighbours. *If there be any virtue, think of these things*: Imitate them in what is truly excellent among them; and let not them outdo you in any instance of goodness. We should not be ashamed to learn any good thing of bad men, or those who have not our advantages. 2. Virtue has its praise, and will have. We should walk in all the ways of virtue, and abide therein; and then whether our *praise* be of men or no; it will be of God, Rom. ii. 29.

In these things he proposeth himself to them for an *example*. Ver. 9. *Those things which you have learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me*, &c. Observe, Paul's doctrine and life were of a piece. What they *saw* in him, was the same thing with what they heard from him. He could propose himself as well as his doctrine to their imitation. It gives a great force to what we say to others, when we can appeal to what they have seen in us. And this is the way to have the *God of peace with us*, to keep close to our duty to him: *The Lord is with us while we are with him*.

10. But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again, wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity. 11. Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned in whatsoever state I am, *therewith* to be content. 12. I know both *how* to be abased, and I know *how* to abound: every where, and in all things I am instructed, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. 13. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. 14. Notwithstanding, ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction. 15. Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me, as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. 16. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. 17. Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. 18. But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things *which were sent* from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God. 19. But my God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory, by Christ Jesus.

In these verses we have the thankful, grateful acknowledgment, which the apostle makes of the kindness of the Philippians in sending him a present for his support, now he was a *prisoner* at Rome. And here,

1. He takes occasion from hence to acknowledge their former kindness to him, and to make mention of them, ver. 15, 16. Paul had a grateful spirit: for though what his friends did for him was nothing in comparison of what he deserved from them, and the obligations he had laid upon them; yet he speaks of their kindness as if it had been a piece of generous charity, when it was really far short of a just debt. If they had each of them contributed half their estates to him, they had not given him too much, since they *owed to him even their own souls*; and yet when they sent a small present to him, how kindly doth he take it, how thankfully doth he mention it, even in this epistle which was to be left upon record, and read in the churches through all ages? so that wherever this epistle shall be read, there shall this which they did to Paul be told for a memorial of them: Surely never was present so well repaid.

He minds them, That *in the beginning of the gospel no church communicated with him as to giving and receiving, but they only*, ver. 15. They not only maintained him comfortably while he was with them; but when he departed from Macedonia, they sent tokens of their kindness after him; and this when no other church did so besides. None but they sent after him of their *carnal things*, in consideration of what they had reaped of his *spiritual things*. In works of charity we are ready to ask what other

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people do; but the church of the Philippians never considered that: It redounded so much the more to their honour, that they were the only church who were thus just and generous. *Even in Thessalonica* (after he was departed from Macedonia) *you sent once and again to my necessity*, ver. 16. Observe, 1. It was but little which they sent; they sent only to his necessity; just such things as he had need of, perhaps it was according to their ability; and he did not desire superfluities, or dainties. 2. It is an excellent thing to see those to whom God has abounded in the gifts of his grace, abounding in grateful returns to his people and ministers, according to their own ability, and their necessity. *Ye sent once and again*. Many people make it an excuse for their charity, that they have given once; why should the charge come upon them again? But the Philippians sent *once and again*; they oftentimes relieved and refreshed him in his necessities. He makes this mention of their former kindness, not only in his own gratitude, but for their encouragement.

2. He excuses their neglect of late. It seems, for some time, they had not sent to enquire after him, or sent him any present; but *now at the last their care of him flourished again*, ver. 10. like a tree in the spring, which seemed all the winter to be quite dead. Now in conformity to the example of his great Master, instead of upbraiding them for their neglect, he makes an excuse for them. *Wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity*. How could they lack opportunity, if they had been resolved upon it? They might have sent a messenger on purpose: But the apostle is willing to suppose in favour of them, that they would have done it, if a fair opportunity had offered. How contrary is this to the carriage of many to their friends, by whom neglects which really are excusable, are resented very heinously; when Paul excused that which he had reason enough to resent?

3. He commends their present liberality. *Notwithstanding ye have well done that ye did communicate with my affliction*, ver. 14. It is a good work to succour and help a good minister in trouble. Here see what is the nature of true Christian sympathy; not only to be concerned for our friends in their troubles, but to do what we can to help them. They *communicated with his affliction*, in relieving him under it. He who saith *be ye warmed, be ye filled, and giveth not those things they have need of*; what doth it profit? Jam. ii. 16.

He rejoiced greatly in it, ver. 10. because it was an evidence of their affection to him, and the success of his ministry among them. When the fruit of their charity abounded towards the apostle, it appeared the fruit of his ministry abounded among them.

4. He takes care to obviate the ill use some might make of his taking so much notice of what was sent him. It did not proceed either from discontent and distrust, ver. 11. or from covetousness and love of the world, ver. 12.

(1.) It did not come from discontent or distrust of providence. *Not that I speak in respect of want*, ver. 11. Not in respect of any want he felt, or of any want he feared: As to the former, he was content with the little he had, and that satisfied him; as to the latter, he depended upon the providence of God to provide for him from day to day, and that satisfied him. So that he did not speak in respect of want any way. *For I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content*. We have here an account of Paul's *learning*, not that which he got at the feet of Gamaliel, but that which he got at the feet of Christ. He had learnt to be *content*; and that was a lesson he had as much need to learn as most men, considering the hardships and sufferings with which he was exercised. He was in *bonds* and *imprisonments*, and *necessities* oft; but in all he had learnt to be content, i. e. to bring his mind to his condition, and make the best of it.

I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound, ver. 12. This is a special act of grace, to accommodate ourselves to every condition of life, and carry an equal temper of mind through all the varieties of our state. 1. To accommodate ourselves to an afflicted condition; to know how to be *abased*, how to be *hungry*, how to *suffer want*, so as not to be overcome by the temptations of it, either to lose our comfort in God, or distrust his providence, or to take any indirect course for our own supply. 2. To a prosperous condition; to know how to *abound*, how to be *full*, so as not to be proud, or secure, or luxurious. And this is as hard a lesson as the other; for the temptations of fulness and prosperity are not less than those of affliction and want. But how must we learn it? *I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me*, ver. 13. We have need of strength from Christ to enable us to perform not only those duties which are purely Christian, but even those which are the fruit of moral virtue. We need his strength to teach us to be content in every condition. The apostle had seemed to boast of himself, and of his own strength. *I know how to be abased*, ver. 12. but here he transfers all the praise to Christ. What do I talk of *knowing how to be abased, and how to abound*? it is only *through Christ who strengthens me*, that I can do it, not in my own strength. So we are required to be *strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might*, Eph. vi. 10. and to be *strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus*, 2 Tim. ii. 1. and we are *strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man*, Eph. iii. 16. The word in the

original is a participle of the present tense, *ἐν τῷ ἐνδυναμῶντί με Χριστῷ*, and denotes a present and continued act, *q. d.* through Christ who is strengthening me, and does continually strengthen me; it is by his constant and renewed strength I am enabled to act in every thing; I wholly depend upon him for all my spiritual power.

(2.) It did not come from covetousness, or an affection to worldly wealth. *Not because I desire a gift*, ver. 17. *i. e.* I welcome your kindness, not because it adds to my enjoyments, but because it adds to your account. He desired it not so much for his own sake, but theirs: *I desire fruit that may abound to your account*, *i. e.* That you may be enabled to make such a good use of your worldly possessions, that you may give an account of them with joy. It is not with any design to draw more from you, but to encourage you to such an exercise of beneficence as will meet with a glorious reward hereafter. For my part, saith he, *I have all and abound*, ver. 18. What can a man desire more than enough? I do not desire a gift for the gift's sake, for *I have all and abound*. They sent him a small token, and he desired no more; he was not solicitous for a present superfluity, or a future supply: *I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you*. Note, A good man will soon have enough of this world; not only of living in it, but of receiving from it. A covetous worldling, if he has never so much, would still have more; but a heavenly Christian, though he hath little, hath enough.

5. The apostle assures them, that God did accept, and would recompense their kindness to him.

(1.) He did accept it: *It is an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God*. Not a sacrifice of atonement, for none makes atonement for sin but Christ; but a sacrifice of acknowledgment, and *well-pleasing to God*. It was more acceptable to God, as it was the fruit of their grace; than it was to Paul, as it was the supply of his want. *With such sacrifice God is well pleased*, Heb. xiii. 16.

(2.) He would recompense it: *But my God shall supply all your wants according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus*, ver. 19. He doth as it were draw a bill upon the exchequer in heaven, and leaves it to God to make them amends for the kindness they had shewed him. He shall do it not only as your God, but as my God; who takes what is done to me as done to himself. You supplied my needs, according to your poverty; and he shall supply yours, according to his riches. But still it is *by Christ Jesus*: Through him we have grace to do that which is good, and through him we must expect the reward of it: Not of *debt*, but of *grace*; for the more we do for God, the more we are indebted to him, because we receive the more from him.

20. Now unto God and our Father *be* glory for ever and ever. Amen. 21. Salute every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren which are with me greet you. 22. All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Cæsars household. 23. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen.

The apostle concludes the epistle in these verses:

1. With praises to God. *Now unto God and our Father, be glory for ever and ever, Amen*, ver. 20. Observe, (1.) That God is to be considered by us as *our Father*. *Now unto God and our Father*. It is a great condescension and favour in God to own the relation of father to sinners, and allow us to say to him *our Father*; and it is a title peculiar to the gospel dispensation: And it is a great privilege and encouragement to us to consider him as *our Father*; as one so nearly related, and who bears so tender an affection towards us. We should look upon God under all our weakness and fears, not as a tyrant or an enemy, but as a *father*, who is disposed to pity us, and help us. (2.) We must ascribe glory to God as a Father: The glory of his own excellence, and of all his mercy unto us. We must thankfully own the receipt of all from him, and give the praise of all to him. And our praise must be constant and perpetual; it must be *glory for ever and ever*.

2. With salutations to his friends at Philippi. *Salute every saint in Christ Jesus*, ver. 21. *i. e.* give my hearty love to all the Christians in your parts. He desires remembrances not only to the *bishops and deacons*, and the church in general, but to every particular saint. Paul had a kind affection to all good Christians.

3. He sends salutations from those who were at Rome. *The brethren who are with me salute you*, *i. e.* The *ministers* and all the saints here send their affectionate remembrances to you. *Chiefly they who are of Cæsar's household*; the Christian converts who belong to the Emperor's court. Observe, (1.) There were saints in Cæsar's household. Though Paul was imprisoned at Rome for preaching the gospel, by the emperor's command; yet there were some Christians in his own family. The gospel early obtained among some of the rich and great. Perhaps the apostle fared the better, and received some favour by the means of his friends at court. (2.) *Chiefly they, &c.* Observe, That they being bred at court were more *complaisant* than the rest. See what an ornament to religion sanctified civility is.

4. The apostolical *benediction*, as usual. *The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you all. Amen. i. e.* The free favour and good will of Christ be your portion and happiness.

A N

E X P O S I T I O N

O F T H E

Epistle of St. PAUL to the COLOSSIANS,

W I T H

P R A C T I C A L O B S E R V A T I O N S.

Colosse was a considerable city of Phrygia, and probably not far from Laodicea and Hierapolis; we find these three mentioned together, chap. iv. 13. It is now buried in ruins, and the memory of it chiefly preserved in this epistle. The design of the epistle is to warn them of the danger of the Jewish zealots, who pressed the necessity of observing the ceremonial law; and to fortify them against the mixture of the Gentile philosophy with their Christian principles. He professes a great satisfaction in their steadfastness and constancy, and encourages them to perseverance. It was writ about the same time with the epistle to the Ephesians and Philippians, anno Dom. 62. and in the same place, while he was now prisoner at Rome. He was not idle in his confinement, and the word of God was not bound.

This

This epistle, like that to the Romans, was writ to those whom he had never seen, nor had any personal acquaintance with. The church planted at Colosse was not by Paul's ministry, but by the ministry of Epaphras or Epaphroditus, an evangelist, one whom he delegated to preach the gospel among the Gentiles; and yet,

1. *There was a flourishing church at Colosse, and one which was eminent and famous among the churches. One would have thought none should have come to be flourishing churches, but they which Paul himself had planted; but here was a flourishing church planted by Epaphras. God is sometimes pleased to make use of the ministry of those who are of less note, and lower gifts, for the doing great service to his church. God uses what hands he pleases, and is not tied to those of note, that the excellence of the power may appear to be of God, and not of men, 2 Cor. iv. 7.*

2. *Though Paul had not the planting of this church, yet he did not therefore neglect it; nor in writing his epistles, does he make any difference between that and other churches. The Colossians who were converted by the ministry of Epaphras, were as dear to him, and he as much concerned for their welfare, as the Philippians or any others who were converted by his ministry. Thus he put an honour upon an inferior minister, and teaches us not to be selfish; nor think all that honour lost which goes besides ourselves. We see in his example, not to think it a disparagement to us to water what others have planted; or build upon the foundation which others have laid: As he himself as a wise master-builder laid the foundation, and another builded thereon, 1 Cor. iii. 10.*

C H A P. I.

The inscription as usual, ver. 1, 2. His thanksgiving to God for what he had heard concerning them; their faith, love, and hope, ver. 3—8. He prays for their knowledge, fruitfulness, and strength, ver. 9—11. Gives them an admirable summary of the Christian doctrine concerning the operation of the Spirit, the person of the Redeemer, the work of redemption, and the preaching of it in the gospel, ver. 12—28.

1. **P**AUL an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God, and Timotheus our brother,
2. To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ, which are at Colosse: Grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The inscription of this epistle is much the same with the rest; only it is observable,

1. That he calls himself an *apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God*. An apostle is a prime minister in the kingdom of Christ, immediately called by Christ, and *extraordinarily* qualified; their work was peculiarly to *plant* the Christian church, and *confirm* the Christian doctrine. He attributes this not to his own merit, strength, or sufficiency; but to the free grace and good-will of God. He thought himself engaged to do his utmost, as an apostle, because he was made so by the will of God.

2. He joins Timothy in commission with himself, which is another instance of his humility; and though he elsewhere calls him *his son*, 2 Tim. ii. 1. yet here he calls him *his brother*; which is an example to the elder, and more eminent ministers, to look upon the younger and more obscure, as their brethren, and to treat them accordingly with kindness and respect.

3. He calls the Christians at Colosse *saints, and faithful brethren in Christ*. As all good ministers, so all good Christians are brethren one to another, who stand in a near relation, and owe a mutual love. And towards God they must be *saints*, consecrated to his honour, and sanctified by his grace; bearing his image, and aiming at his glory. And in both these, as *saints* to God, and as *brethren* to one another, they must be *faithful*. Faithfulness runs through every character and relation of the Christian life, and is the crown and glory of them all.

4. The apostolical benediction is the same as usual. *Grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ*. He wishes them *grace and peace*, the free favour of God, and all the blessed fruits of it; all kind of spiritual blessings, and that from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ; jointly from both, and distinctly from each; as in the former epistle.

3. We give thanks to God, and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you: 4. Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints; 5. For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel: 6. Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world, and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the

grace of God in truth. 7. As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellow-servant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ; 8. Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit.

Here he proceeds to the body of the epistle, and begins with thanksgiving to God for what he had heard concerning them, though he had no personal acquaintance with them, and knew their state and character only by the reports of others. He gave thanks to God for them, that they had embraced the gospel of Christ, and given proofs of their fidelity to him. Observe, In his prayers for them he gave thanks for them. Thanksgiving ought to be a part of every prayer; and whatever is the matter of our rejoicing, ought to be the matter of our thanksgiving. Observe, (1.) Whom he gives thanks to: *To God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*. In our thanksgiving we must have an eye to God as God; he is the object of thanksgiving as well as prayer; and as the *Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*, in and through whom all good comes to us. He is the *Father* of our Lord Jesus Christ as well as *our Father*; and it is matter of encouragement in all our addresses to God, that we can look to him as *Christ's Father and our Father, as his God and our God*, John xx. 17. Observe, (2.) What he gives thanks to God for: For the graces of God in them, which were evidences of the grace of God towards them. *Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love you have to all the saints: For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven*, ver. 4, 5. Faith, hope, and love, are the three principal graces in the Christian life, and proper matter of our prayer and thanksgiving. (1.) He gives thanks for their *faith in Christ Jesus*: That they were brought to believe in him, and take upon them the profession of his religion, and venture their souls upon his undertaking. (2.) For their love: Besides the general love which is due to all men, there is a particular love owing to the saints, or those who are of the Christian *brotherhood*, 1 Pet. ii. 17. We must love *all the saints*, bear an extensive kindness and good-will to good men, notwithstanding lesser points of difference, and many real weaknesses. Some understand it of their charity to the saints in necessity, which is one branch and evidence of Christian love. (3.) For their hope. *The hope which is laid up for you in heaven*, ver. 5. The happiness of heaven is called their hope, because it is the *thing hoped for*; *looking for the blessed hope*, Tit. ii. 13. What is laid out upon believers in this world is much, but what is laid up for them in heaven is much more. And we have reason to give thanks to God for the hope of heaven, which good Christians have; or their well-grounded expectation of the future glory. Their faith in Christ, and love to the saints, had an eye to the *hope laid up for them in heaven*. The more we fix our hopes on the recompence of reward in the other world, the more free and liberal shall we be of our earthly treasure upon all occasions of doing good.

Having blessed God for these graces, he blesses God for the means of grace which they enjoyed. *Wherein ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel*. They had heard in the word of the truth of the gospel concerning this *hope laid up for them in heaven*. Observe, (1.) That the gospel is the *word of truth*, and what we may safely venture our immortal souls upon: It proceeds from the *God of truth*, and the *Spirit of truth*, and is a *faithful saying*. He calls it, *the grace of God in truth*, ver. 6. (2.) It is a great mercy to hear this word of truth; for the great thing we learn from it is the happiness of heaven. *Eternal life is brought to light by the gospel*, 2 Tim. i. 10. They heard of the hope laid up in heaven in the word of the truth of the gospel. *Which is come unto you, as*

it is in all the world, and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, ver. 6. This gospel is preached, and bringeth forth fruit in other nations; it is come to you, as it is in all the world, according to the commission, *Go preach the gospel in all the nations, and to every creature.* Observe, (1.) That all who hear the word of the gospel ought to bring forth the fruit of the gospel, i. e. be obedient to it, and have their principles and lives formed according to it. This was the doctrine first preached. *Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance,* Matt. iii. 8. And our Lord says, *If you know these things, happy are ye if you do them,* John xiii. 17. Observe, (2.) That wherever the gospel comes, it will bring forth fruit to the honour and glory of God. *It bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you.* We mistake, if we think to monopolize the comforts and benefits of the gospel to ourselves. Doth the gospel bring forth fruit in us? so it doth in others.

He takes this occasion to mention the minister by whom they believed, ver. 7, 8. *As ye also learned of Epaphras, our dear fellow-servant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ.* He mentions him with great respect, to engage their love to him. (1.) He calls him his *fellow-servant*; to signify not only that they served the same master, but that they were engaged in the same work. They were *fellow-labourers* in the work of the Lord, though one was an apostle; and the other an ordinary minister. (2.) He calls him his *dear fellow-servant*; all the servants of Christ ought to love one another, and it is an endearing consideration that they are engaged in the same service. (3.) He represents him as one who was a *faithful* minister of Christ to them, who discharged his trust, and fulfilled his ministry among them. Observe, Christ is our proper master, and we are his ministers: He does not say, who is your minister; but who is the *minister of Christ for you.* It is by his authority and appointment, though for the people's service. (4.) He represents him as one who gave them a *good word.* *Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit,* ver. 8. He recommends him to their affection from the good report he made of their sincere love to Christ, and all his members, which was wrought in them by the Spirit, and is agreeable to the Spirit of the gospel. Faithful ministers are glad to be able to speak well of their people.

9. For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding: 10. That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11. Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness;

The apostle proceeds in these verses to prayer for them. He heard they were good, and he prayed that they might be better. He was constant in this prayer: *We do not cease to pray for you.* It may be he could hear of them but seldom, but he constantly prayed for them. And *desire that you might be filled with the knowledge,* &c. Observe, What it is that he begs of God for them.

1. That they might be knowing intelligent Christians; *filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.* Observe, (1.) The knowledge of our duty is the best knowledge. Mere empty notion of the greatest truths is insignificant. Our knowledge of the will of God must be always practical: we must know it in order to do it. (2.) Our knowledge is then a blessing indeed when it is wisdom, i. e. when we know how to apply our general knowledge to our particular occasions, and to suit it to all emergencies. (3.) Christians should endeavour to be filled with knowledge; not only to know the will of God, but to know more of it, and to *increase in the knowledge of God,* as it is ver. 11. and to *grow in grace and in knowledge of our Lord and Saviour,* 2 Pet. iii. 18.

2. That their conversation might be good. Good knowledge without a good life will not profit: Our understanding is then a spiritual understanding, when we exemplify it in our way of living. *That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing,* ver. 10. i. e. as becomes the relation we stand in to him, and the profession we make of him. The agreeableness of our conversation to our religion is pleasing to God, as well as to good men. We walk unto *all well-pleasing,* when we walk in all things, according to the will of God. *Being fruitful in every good work.* This is what we should aim at. *Good words will not do without good works.* We must *abound* in good works, and in every good work: Not in some only which are more easy, and suitable and safe, but in all, and every instance of them. There must be a regular, uniform regard to all the will of God. And the more faithful we are in good works, the more we shall *increase in the knowledge of God.* *He who doth his will, shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God,* Joh. vii. 17.

3. That they might be strengthened; *strengthened with all might according to his glorious power,* ver. 11. i. e. fortified against the temptations of Satan, and furnished for all their duty. It is

a great comfort to us, that he who undertakes to give *strength* to his people is a God of power, and of glorious power: where there is spiritual life, there is still need of spiritual strength; strength for all the actions of the spiritual life. To be strengthened is to be furnished by the grace of God for every good work, and fortified by that grace against every evil one. It is to be enabled to do our duty, and still to hold fast our integrity. The blessed Spirit is the author of this strength: for we are *strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inward man,* Eph. iii. 16. The word of God is the means of it, by which he conveys it, and it must be fetched in by prayer. It was in answer to earnest prayer the apostle obtained sufficient grace. In praying for spiritual strength we are not straitened in the promises, and therefore should not be straitened in our own hopes and desires. Observe, (1.) He prays that they might be strengthened *with might*: That seems a tautology; but he means, that they might be mightily strengthened, or strengthened with might derived from another. (2.) It is with *all might*. It seems unreasonable that a creature should be strengthened with *all might*, for that is to make him *almighty*: But he means, with all that might which we have occasion for to enable us to discharge our duty, or preserve our innocence; that *grace* which is *sufficient* for us in all the trials of life, and able to *help us in time of need.* (3.) It is according to *his glorious power*. He means according to the grace of God; but the grace of God in the hearts of believers, is the *power* of God; and there is *a glory* in this power; it is an excellent and sufficient power. And the communications of strength are not according to our weakness to whom the strength is communicated, but according to his power from whom it is received. When God gives, he gives like himself; and when he strengthens, he strengthens like himself. (4.) The special use of this strength was for suffering work: *That you may be strengthened unto all patience and long suffering with joyfulness.* He prays not only that they might be supported under their troubles, but *strengthened* for them; the reason is, there is work to be done even when we are suffering. And they who are strengthened *according to his glorious power*, are strengthened, (1.) To *all patience*. When patience hath its perfect work, Jam. i. 4. then we are strengthened to *all patience*. When we not only bear our troubles patiently, but receive them as gifts from God, and are thankful for them. To you it is *given to suffer*, Phil. i. 29. When we bear our troubles well, though ever so many, and the circumstances of them ever so aggravating; then we bear them with *all patience*. And the same reason for bearing one trouble, will hold for our bearing another, if it be a good reason. And all patience includes all the kinds of it; not only bearing patience, but waiting patience. (2.) This patience is *even unto long-suffering*, i. e. patience drawn out to a great length: Not only to bear trouble for a while, but to bear it as long as God pleases to continue it. (3.) It is with *joyfulness*: To *rejoice in tribulation*; to *take joyfully the spoiling of our goods*; and *rejoice* that we are counted *worthy to suffer for his name*; to have joy as well as patience in the troubles of life. This we could never do by any strength of our own, but as we are strengthened by the grace of God.

12. Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: 13. Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: 14. In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins. 15. Who is the image of the invisible God, the first born of every creature: 16. For by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether *they be* thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him. 17. And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. 18. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. 19. For it pleased *the Father* that in him should all fulness dwell; 20. And (having made peace through the blood of his cross) by him to reconcile all things unto himself, by him, *I say*, whether *they be* things in earth, or things in heaven. 21. And you that were sometime alienated, and enemies in *your* mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled, 22. In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable, and unproveable in his sight: 23. If ye continue in the faith, grounded and settled and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, *and* which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister. 24. Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh, for his bodies sake, which is the church: 25. Whereof I am made a minister according to

to the dispensation of God, which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; 26. *Even* the mystery which hath been hid from ages, and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: 27. To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: 28. Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: 29. Whereunto I also labour striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.

Here is the summary of the doctrine of the gospel concerning the great work of our redemption by Christ. It comes in here not as the matter of a sermon, but as the matter of a thanksgiving: for our salvation by Christ furnishes us with abundant matter of thanksgiving in every view of it. *Giving thanks unto the Father*, ver. 12. He does not discourse of the work of redemption in the natural order of it; for then he should speak of the purchase of it first, and then of the application of it. But here he inverts the order; because in our sense and feeling of it, the application goes before the purchase. We first find the benefits of redemption in our own hearts, and then are led by those streams to the original and fountain head. The order and connexion of the apostle's discourse may be considered in the following manner.

§. 1. He speaks concerning the operations of the Spirit of grace upon us. And we must give thanks for them, because by these we are qualified for an interest in the mediation of the Son. *Giving thanks to the Father*, &c. ver. 12, 13. It is spoken of as the work of the Father, because the Spirit of grace is the Spirit of the Father, and the Father works in us by his Spirit. They in whom the work of grace is wrought, must give thanks unto the Father. If we have the comfort of it, he must have the glory of it. Now what is it which is wrought for us in the application of redemption?

1. He hath delivered us from the power of darkness, ver. 13. He has rescued us from the state of heathenish darkness and wickedness, *i. e.* He has saved us from the dominion of sin which is darkness, 1 John i. 6. and from the dominion of Satan who is the prince of darkness, Eph. vi. 12. and from the damnation of hell which is outer darkness, Matt. xxv. 30. They are called out of darkness, 1 Pet. ii. 9.

2. He hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son, *i. e.* brought us into the gospel-state, and made us members of the church of Christ, which is a state of light and purity. *Ye were once darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord*, Eph. v. 8. *Who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light*, 1 Pet. ii. 9. They were made willing subjects of Christ, who were the slaves of Satan. The conversion of a sinner is the translation of a soul into the kingdom of Christ, out of the kingdom of the devil. The power of sin is shaken off, and the power of Christ submitted to. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, makes them free from the law of sin and death. And it is the kingdom of his dear Son, or the Son of his peculiar love, his beloved Son, Matt. iii. 17. and eminently the beloved, Eph. i. 6.

3. He hath not only done this, but hath made us meet to partake of the inheritance of the saints in light, ver. 12. *i. e.* He hath prepared us for the eternal happiness of heaven, as the Israelites divided the promised land by lot; and given us the earnest and assurance of it. This he mentions first, because it is the first indication of the future blessedness, that by the grace of God we find our selves in some measure prepared for it. God gives grace and glory, and we are here told what they both are. (1.) What that glory is: It is the inheritance of the saints in light. It is an inheritance, and belongs to them as children, which is the best security, and the sweetest tenure. *If children, then heirs*, Rom. viii. 17. And it is an inheritance of the saints, proper to sanctified souls. They who are not saints on earth, will never be saints in heaven. And it is an inheritance in light; the perfection of knowledge, holiness, and joy, by communion with God who is light, and the Father of lights, Jam. i. 17. 1 Joh. i. 5. (2.) What is this grace. It is a meetness for the inheritance. *He hath made us meet to be partakers*, *i. e.* suited and fitted us for the heavenly state by a proper temper and habit of soul; and he makes us meet, by the powerful influence of his Spirit. It is the effect of the divine power to change the heart, and make it heavenly. Observe, That all who are designed for heaven hereafter, are prepared for heaven now. As they who live and die unsanctified, go out of the world with their hell about them; so they who are sanctified and renewed, go out of the world with their heaven about them. They who have the inheritance of sons, have the education of sons, and the disposition of sons. They have the Spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, *Abba, Father*, Rom. viii. 17. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts crying *Abba, Father*, Gal. iv. 6. This meetness for heaven is the earnest of the Spirit in our heart; which is part of payment, and assures the full payment. They who are sanctified, shall be glorified, Rom. viii. 30. and will be for ever indebted to the grace of God which hath sanctified them.

No. cxi.

§. 2. Concerning the person of the Redeemer; and glorious things are here said of him; for blessed Paul was full of Christ, and took all occasions to speak honourably of him. He speaks of him distinctly as God, and as mediator. As God he speaks of him, ver. 15, 16, 17.

1. He is the image of the invisible God. Not as man was made in the image of God, Gen. i. 26. in his natural faculties and dominion over the creatures. No, he is the express image of his person, Heb. i. 3. He is so the image of God, as the Son is the image of his Father, who has a natural likeness to him; and as he who hath seen him, hath seen the Father; and his glory was the glory of the only begotten of the Father, Joh. i. 14. — xiv. 9.

2. He is the first born of every creature: Not that he is himself a creature; for it is *πρωτότοκος* *πάσης κτίσεως*, born or begotten before all the creation, or any creature was made; which is the scripture way of representing eternity, and by which the eternity of God is represented to us. *I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was; when there was no depth, before the mountains were settled, while as yet he had not made the earth*, Prov. viii. 23, 24, 26. And it signifies his dominion over all things; as the first born in a family is heir, and lord of all, so he is the heir of all things, Heb. i. 2. The word, with only the change of the accent, *πρωτότοκος*, signifies actively, the first begetter or producer of all things, and so it well agrees with the following clause, *Vid. Isidor. Pelusiotum epist. 30. lib. 3.*

3. He is so far from being himself a creature, that he is the Creator. *For by him were all things created which are in heaven and earth, visible and invisible*, ver. 16. He made all things out of nothing; the highest angel in heaven, as well as men upon earth. He made the world, the upper and lower world, with all the inhabitants of both; *all things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made which was made*, Joh. i. 3. He speaks here as if there were several orders of angels; *whether thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers*: Which must signify either different degrees of excellence, or different offices and employment. *Angels, authorities, and powers*, 1 Pet. iii. 22. Christ is the eternal wisdom of the Father, and the world was made in wisdom. He is the eternal Word, and the world was made by the word of God. He is the arm of the Lord, and the world was made by that arm. *All things are created by him and for him*; *δι' αὐτῆς καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν*. Being created by him, they were created for him; being made by his power, they were made according to his pleasure, and for his praise. He is the end, as well as the cause of all things. *To him are all things*, Rom. xi. 36. *εἰς αὐτὸν τὰ πάντα*.

4. He is before all things. He had a being before the world was made; before the beginning of time, and therefore from all eternity. Wisdom was with the Father, and possessed by him in the beginning of his ways, before his works of old, Prov. viii. 22. And in the beginning the Word was with God, and was God, Joh. i. 1. He not only had a being before he was born of the virgin, but he had a being before all time.

5. By him all things consist. They not only subsist in their beings, but consist in their order and dependencies. He not only created them all at first, but it is by the word of his power that they are still upheld, Heb. i. 3. The whole creation is kept together by the power of the Son of God, and made to consist in its proper frame. It is preserved from disbanding, and running into confusion.

The apostle next shews what he is as mediator, ver. 18, 19.

1. He is the head of the body the church: Not only a head of government and direction, as the king is the head of the state, and has right to prescribe laws, but a head of vital influence, as the head in the natural body: for all grace and strength are derived from him; and the church is his body, the fulness of him who filleth all in all, Eph. i. 22, 23.

2. He is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, *ἀρχὴ, πρωτότοκος*. The principle, the first-born from the dead. The principle of our resurrection, as well as the first-born himself. All our hopes and joys take their rise from him who is the author of our salvation. Not that he was the first who ever rose from the dead, but the first and only one who rose by his own power, and was declared to be the Son of God, and Lord of all things. And he is the head of the resurrection, and has given us an example and evidence of our resurrection from the dead. He rose as the first-fruits, 1 Cor. xv. 20.

3. He hath in all things the preeminence. It was the will of the Father that he should have all power in heaven and earth, that he might be preferred above angels, and all the powers in heaven; he has obtained a more excellent name than they, Heb. i. 4. and that in all the affairs of the kingdom of God among men, he should have the preeminence. He has the preeminence in the hearts of his people, above the world and the flesh; and by giving him the preeminence we comply with the Father's will, That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father, Joh. v. 23.

4. All fulness dwells in him, and it pleased the Father it should do so, ver. 19. Not only a fulness of abundance for himself, but redundancy for us. A fulness of merit and righteousness;

of strength and grace. As the head is the seat and source of the animal spirits, so is Christ of all graces to his people. *It pleased the Father* that all fulness should dwell in him; and we may have free resort to him for all that grace which we have occasion for. He not only intercedes for it, but is the trustee in whose hands it is lodged to dispense to us. *Of his fulness we receive, and grace for grace*; grace in us answering to that grace which is in him, *Joh. i. 16. and he fills all in all, Eph. i. 23.*

§. 3. Concerning the work of redemption. He speaks of the nature of it, or wherein it consists; and of the means of it by which it was procured.

1. Wherein it consists. And it is made to lie in two things. (1.) In the remission of sin. *In whom we have redemption, even the forgiveness of sins, ver. 14.* It was sin which sold us, sin which enslaved us, if we are redeemed, we must be redeemed from sin: and this is by forgiveness, or remitting the obligation to punishment. So *Eph. i. 7. In whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.* (2.) In reconciliation to God, God by him reconciled all things to himself, *ver. 20.* He is the mediator of reconciliation, who procures peace as well as pardon, and brings them into a state of friendship and favour at present, and will bring all holy creatures, angels as well as men, into one glorious and blessed society at last; *things in earth, or things in heaven.* So *Ephes. i. 10. He will gather together in one, all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth.* The word is *ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι*, he will bring them all under one head. The Gentiles who were alienated, and enemies in their minds by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled, *ver. 21.* Here see what was their condition by nature, and in their Gentile state; estranged from God, and at enmity with God; and yet this enmity is slain, and notwithstanding this distance we are now reconciled. Christ has laid the foundation for our reconciliation; for he hath paid the price of it, hath purchased the proffer and promise of it, proclaims it as a prophet, applies it as a king. Observe, The greatest enemies to God, who have stood at the greatest distance and defiance to him, may be reconciled, if it is not their own fault.

2. How the redemption is procured. *It is through his blood, ver. 14. and he has made peace through the blood of his cross, ver. 20.* And it is *in the body of his flesh through death, ver. 22.* It was the blood which made an atonement, for the blood is the life; and without the shedding of blood there is no remission, *Heb. ix. 22.* There was such a value in the blood of Christ, that on the account of Christ's shedding it, God was willing to deal with men upon new terms, and bring them under a covenant of grace; and for his sake, and in consideration of his death upon the cross, to pardon and accept to favour, all who comply with them.

§. 4. Concerning the preaching of this redemption. Here observe,

1. To whom it was preached. *To every creature under heaven, ver. 23. i. e. it was ordered to be preached to every creature, Mark xvi. 15.* It may be preached to every creature; for the gospel excludes none who do not exclude themselves. More or less it hath, or will be preached to every nation; though many have sinned away the light of it, and perhaps some have never yet enjoyed it.

2. By whom it was preached. *Whereof I Paul am made a minister.* Paul was a great apostle, but he looks upon it as the highest of his titles of honour, to be a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul takes all occasions to speak of his office; for he magnified his office, *Rom. xi. 13.* And again in *ver. 25. whereof I am made a minister.* Observe here, (1.) Whence Paul had his ministry: It was according to the dispensation of God which was given to him, *ver. 25. i. e. the œconomy, or wise disposition of things in the house of God.* He was steward and master-builder, and this was given to him: he did not usurp it, or take it to himself; and he could not challenge it as a debt. He received it from God as a gift, and took it as a favour. (2.) For whose sake he had his ministry; *It is for you, for your benefit: ourselves your servants for Jesus sake, 2 Cor. iv. 5.* We are Christ's ministers for the good of his people; to fulfil the word of God, i. e. fully to preach it, of which you will have the greater advantage. The more we fulfil our ministry, or fill up all the parts of it, the greater will be the benefit of the people. They will be the more filled with knowledge, and furnished for service. (3.) What kind of preacher Paul was. This is particularly represented. 1. He was a suffering preacher. *Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, ver. 24.* He suffered in the cause of Christ, and for the good of the church. He suffered for preaching the gospel to them. And while he suffered in so good a cause, he could rejoice in his sufferings; rejoice that he was counted worthy to suffer, and esteem it an honour to him. *And fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh.* Not that the afflictions of Paul, or any other, were expiations for sin, as the sufferings of Christ were. There was nothing wanting in them; nothing which needed to be filled up: They were perfectly sufficient to answer the intention of them, the satisfaction of God's justice, in order to the salvation of his people. But the sufferings of Paul and other good ministers, made them conformable to Christ; and they followed him in his suffering state; so they are said to fill up what was

behind of the sufferings of Christ, as the wax fills up the vacancies of the seal, when it receives the impression of it. Or it may be meant not of Christ's suffering, but of his suffering for Christ. He filled up that which was behind. He had a certain rate and measure of suffering for Christ assigned him; and as his sufferings were agreeable to that appointment, so he was still filling up more and more what was behind, or remained of them to his share. 2. He was a close preacher: he preached not only in publick, but from house to house, from person to person. *Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, ver. 28.* Every man has need to be warned and taught, and therefore let every man have his share. Observe, (1.) When we warn people of what they do amiss, we must teach them to do better: warning and teaching must go together. (2.) Men must be warned and taught in all wisdom. We must chuse the fittest seasons, and use the likeliest means, and accommodate ourselves to the different circumstances and capacities of those we have to do with, and teach them as they are able to bear. And that which he aimed at was to present every man perfect in Christ Jesus, *τελειῶ.* Either perfect in the knowledge of the Christian doctrine; *Let us therefore as many as are perfect be thus minded, Philip. iii. 15.* 2 Tim. iii. 17. Or else crowned with a glorious reward hereafter, when he will present to himself a glorious church, *Ephes. v. 27. and bring them to the spirits of just men made perfect, Heb. xii. 23.* Observe, That ministers ought to aim at the improvement and salvation of every particular person who hears them. (3.) He was a laborious preacher, and one who took pains: he was no loiterer, and did not do the work of the Lord negligently, *ver. 29. Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.* He laboured and strove; used great diligence, and contended with many difficulties, according to the measure of grace afforded to him, and the extraordinary presence of Christ which was with him. Observe, That as Paul laid out himself to do much good; so he had this favour, that the power of God wrought in him more effectually. The more we labour in the work of the Lord, the greater measure of help we may expect from him in it, *Eph. iii. 7. According to the gift of the grace of God given unto me, by the effectual working of his power.*

3. The gospel which was preached. We have an account of that. *Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but is now made manifest to his saints, ver. 26, 27.* Observe, (1.) That the mystery of the gospel was long hid. It was concealed from ages and generations; the several ages of the church under the Old Testament dispensation. They were in a state of minority, and training up for a more perfect state of things, and could not look to the end of those things which were ordained, *2 Cor. iii. 13.* (2.) That this mystery now, in the fulness of time, is made manifest to the saints, or clearly revealed and made apparent. *The veil which was over Moses's face, is done away in Christ, 2 Cor. iii. 14.* The meanest saint under the gospel understands more than the greatest prophets under the law. He who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than they. *The mystery of Christ, which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit, Ephes. iii. 4, 5.* And what is this mystery? It is the riches of God's glory among the Gentiles. The peculiar doctrine of the gospel was a mystery which was before hid, and is now made manifest and made known. But the great mystery here referred to, is the breaking down the partition wall between the Jew and Gentile; and preaching the gospel to the Gentile world, and making them partakers of the privileges of the gospel-state who before lay in ignorance and idolatry. *That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers together of his promise in Christ, by the gospel, Ephes. iii. 6. Which is Christ in you the hope of glory; or among you.* Which mystery thus made known, observe, Christ is the hope of Glory. The ground of our hope is Christ in the word; or the gospel-revelation declaring the nature and methods of obtaining it: The evidence of our hope is Christ in the heart, or the sanctification of the soul, and its preparation for the heavenly glory.

4. The duty of those who are interested in this redemption. *If ye continue in the faith, grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel which ye have heard, ver. 23.* We must continue in the faith grounded and settled, and not be moved away from the hope of the gospel, i. e. so well fixed in our minds, as not to be moved from it by any temptations. We must be steadfast and unmoveable, *1 Cor. xv. ult. and hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering, Heb. x. 23.* Observe, Then only can we expect the happy end of our faith, when we continue in the faith, and are so far grounded and settled in it, as not to be moved from it. We must not draw back unto perdition, but believe unto the saving of the soul, *Heb. x. 39.* We must be faithful to the death, through all trials, that we may receive the crown of life, and receive the end of our faith, the salvation of our souls, *1 Pet. i. 9.*

C H A P. II.

The apostle's concern for the Colossians, ver. 1—4. Repeated again, ver. 5. He cautions them against false teachers among the Jews, ver. 6—8. And against the Gentile philosophy, ver. 9—13. Represents the privileges of Christians, ver. 14—16. And concludes with a caution against the Judaizing teachers, and those who would introduce the worship of angels, ver. 17—22.

1. **F**OR I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh: 2. That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ. 3. In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

We may observe here the great concern which Paul had for these Colossians, and the other churches, which he had not any personal knowledge of. The apostle had never been at Colosse, and the church planted there was not of his planting; and yet he had as tender a care of it, as if it had been the only people of his charge, *ver. 1. For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea; and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh.* Observe, (1.) Paul's care of the church was such as amounted to a conflict. He was in a sort of agony, and had a constant fear concerning them what would become of them. Herein he was a follower of his Master, who was in an agony for us, and was *heard in that he feared.* Observe, (2.) We may keep up a communion by faith, hope, and holy love, even with those churches and fellow-Christians, of whom we have no personal knowledge, or any conversation with. We can think and pray, and be concerned for one another, at the greatest distance; and those we never saw in the flesh, we may hope to meet in heaven.

But what was it the apostle desired for them? *ver. 2. That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, &c.* It was their spiritual welfare he was solicitous about. He doth not say, that they may be healthy and merry, and rich and great, and prosperous; but that their *hearts may be comforted.* Note, The prosperity of the soul is the best prosperity, and what we should be most solicitous about, for ourselves and others. We have here description of soul-prosperity.

1. When our knowledge grows to an *understanding of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ*; then the soul prospers, when we come to have a more clear, distinct, methodical knowledge of the truth, as it is in Jesus. *To understand the mystery*, i. e. either what was before concealed, but is now made known concerning the Father and Christ: Or, the mystery before-mentioned, of calling the Gentiles into the Christian church, as the Father and Christ have revealed it in the gospel: and not barely to speak of it by rote, or as we have been taught it by our catechisms, but to be led into it, and enter into the meaning and design of it. This is what we should labour after, and then the soul prospers.

2. When our faith grows to a full assurance, and bold acknowledgment of this mystery. (1.) To a full assurance, or a well settled judgment, upon their proper evidence, of the great truths of the gospel; without doubting, or calling them in question, but embracing them with the highest satisfaction, as *faithful sayings, and worthy of all acceptation.* (2.) When it comes to a free acknowledgment; and we not only believe with the heart, but are ready, when called to it, to make confession with our mouth; and are not ashamed of our Master, and our holy religion, under the frowns and violence of their enemies. This is called the *riches of the full assurance of understanding.* Great knowledge, and strong faith make a soul rich. This is being *rich toward God, and rich in faith*, and the true riches, Luke xii. 21. Jam. ii. 5.

3. It consists in the abundance of comfort in our souls. *That their hearts might be comforted.* The soul then prospers when it is filled with joy and peace, Rom. xv. 13. and has a satisfaction within, which all the troubles without cannot disturb; and is able to *joy in the Lord*, when all other comforts fail, Hab. iii. 17, 18.

4. The more intimate communion we have with our fellow-Christians, the more the soul prospers: *Being knit together in love.* Holy love knits the hearts of Christians one to another. And faith and love both contribute to our comfort; the stronger our faith is, and the warmer our love, the more will our comfort be.

Having occasion to mention Christ, *ver. 2.* according to his usual way, he makes this remark to his honour, *ver. 3. In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.* He had said, chap. i. 19. *That all fulness dwells in him:* Here he instances particularly in the *treasures of wisdom and knowledge.* There is a fulness of wisdom in him, as he has perfectly revealed the will of God to mankind. Observe, The treasures of wisdom are hid,

not from us, but for us, in Christ. They who would be wise and knowing, must apply themselves to Christ. We must spend upon the stock, which is laid up for us in him, and draw from the treasures which are hid in him. He is the *wisdom of God*; and and is of God made unto us wisdom, &c. 1 Cor. i. 24, 30.

His concern for them is repeated, *ver. 5. Though I am absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit; joying and beholding your order, and the stedfastness of your faith in Christ.* Observe, (1.) That we may be present in spirit with those churches and Christians, from whom we are absent in body; for the communion of saints is a spiritual thing. Paul had heard concerning the Colossians, that they were orderly and regular; and though he had never seen them, nor was present with them, he tells them he could easily think himself among them, and look with pleasure upon their good behaviour. Observe, (2.) The order and stedfastness of Christians, is matter of joy to ministers; they joy when they behold their order, i. e. their regular behaviour, and steadfast adherence to the Christian doctrine. Observe, (3.) The more steadfast our faith in Christ is, the better order there will be in our whole conversation; for we *live, and walk by faith*, 2 Cor. v. 7. Heb. x. 38.

4. And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words. 5. For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the stedfastness of your faith in Christ. 6. As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: 7. Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. 8. Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ: 9. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. 10. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power. 11. In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ: 12. Buried with him in baptism, wherein also you are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

The apostle cautions the Colossians against deceivers, *ver. 4. And this I say, lest any man beguile you with enticing words*; and *ver. 8. Lest any man spoil you.* He insists so much upon the perfection of Christ, and the gospel-revelation, to preserve them from the ensnaring insinuations of those who would corrupt their principles. Note, (1.) The way in which Satan spoils souls, is by *beguiling* them. He *deceives* them, and by it slays them. He is the *old serpent who beguiled Eve through his subtilty*, 2 Cor. xi. 3. He could not ruin us, if he did not cheat us; and he could not cheat us, but by our own fault and folly. (2.) Satan's agents, who aim to spoil them, beguile them with *enticing words*. See the danger of enticing words; how many are ruined by the flattery of those who *lie in wait to deceive*; and by the false disguises and fair appearances of evil principles, and wicked practices. *By good words, and fair speeches, they deceive the hearts of the simple*, Rom. xvi. 18. You ought to stand upon your guard against enticing words, and be aware and afraid of those who would entice you to any evil; for that which they aim at, is to spoil you. *If sinners entice thee, consent thou not*, Prov. i. 10.

Observe, 1. A sovereign antidote against seducers, *ver. 6, 7. As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him, rooted and built up, &c.* Here note, (1.) All Christians have in profession at least *received Jesus Christ the Lord*; received him as Christ, the great prophet of the church, anointed by God to reveal his will; as Jesus the great high priest, and saviour from sin and wrath, by the expiatory sacrifice of himself; and as Lord, or sovereign and king, whom we are to obey and be subject to. *Received him*, i. e. consented to him, taken him for ours, in every relation and capacity, and for all the purposes and uses of them. (2.) The great concern of those who have received Christ, is to *walk in him*; i. e. to make their practices conformable to their principles, and their conversations agreeable to their engagements. As we have received Christ, or consented to be his; so we must walk with him in our daily course, and keep up our communion with him. (3.) The more closely we walk with Christ, the more we are *rooted and stablished in the faith*. A good conversation is the best establishment of a good faith. If we walk in him, we shall be rooted in him; and the more firmly we are rooted in him, the more closely we shall walk in him. *Rooted and built up.* Observe, We cannot be *built up* in Christ, unless we are first *rooted* in him. We must be united to him by a lively faith, and heartily consent to his covenant; and then we shall *grow up in him in all things*: *As ye have been taught*: according to the rule of the Christian doctrine, in which you have been instructed. Observe, A good education has a good influence upon our establishment. We must be *stablished in the faith, as we have been taught, abounding therein.* Observe,

Observe, That being established in the faith, we must *abound* therein, and improve in it more and more. And this *with thanksgiving*. Observe, The way to have the benefit and comfort of God's grace, is to be much in giving thanks for it. We must join thanksgiving to all our improvements, and be sensible of the mercy of all our privileges and attainments.

Observe, 2. The fair warning given us of our danger, *ver. 8. Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ*. There is a philosophy which is a noble exercise of our reasonable faculties, and highly serviceable to religion; such a study of the works of God, as leads us to the knowledge of God, and confirms our faith in him. But there is a philosophy which is *vain and deceitful*; which is prejudicial to religion, and sets up the wisdom of man in competition with the wisdom of God; and while it pleases mens fancies, ruins their faith; as nice and curious speculations about things above us, or of no use and concern to us; or a care of words and terms of art, which had only an empty, and often a cheating appearance of knowledge. *After the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world*. This plainly reflects upon the Jewish pedagogy or œconomy, as well as the Pagan learning. The Jews governed themselves by the traditions of their elders, and the *rudiments* or elements of the world, the rites and observances which were only preparatory and introductory to the gospel-state. And the Gentiles mixed their maxims of philosophy with their Christian principles; and both alienated their minds from Christ. They who pin their faith on other mens sleeves, and walk in the way of the world, are turned away from following after Christ.

The deceivers were especially the Jewish teachers, who endeavoured to keep up the law of Moses in conjunction with the gospel of Christ, but really in competition with it, and contradiction to it. Now here the apostle shews,

1. That we have in Christ the substance of all the shadows of the ceremonial law: for example, (1.) Had they then the *Shechinah*, or special presence of God, called the *glory*, from the visible token of it? So have we now in Jesus Christ, *ver. 9. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*. Under the law, the presence of God dwelt between the *cherubims*, in a *cloud* which covered the *mercy-seat*: But now it dwells in the person of our Redeemer, who partakes of our nature, and is *bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh*; and has more clearly declared the Father to us. It dwells in him *bodily*, not as the body is opposed to the *spirit*, but as the body is opposed to the *shadow*. The fulness of the Godhead dwells in Christ really, and not figuratively; for he is both God and man. (2.) Had they *circumcision*, which was the *seal* of the covenant; in Christ we are *circumcised with the circumcision made without hands*, *ver. 11. i. e.* by the work of regeneration in us, which is the spiritual or Christian circumcision: *He is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart*, Rom. ii. 29. And this is owing to Christ, and belongs to the Christian dispensation. *It is made without hands*; not by the power of any creature, but by the power of the blessed Spirit of God. We are *born of the Spirit*, John iii. 5. And it is the *washing of regeneration, and renewing of the holy Spirit*, Tit. iii. 5. It consists in *putting off the body of the sins of the flesh*; in renouncing sin, and reforming our lives, not in mere external rites. It is not the *putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God*, 1 Pet. iii. 21. And it is not enough to put away some one particular sin, but we must put off the whole body of them: *The old man must be crucified, and the body of sin destroyed*, Rom. vi. 6. Christ was circumcised, and by virtue of our union to him, we partake of that *effectual grace* which puts off the *body of the sins of the flesh*. Again, The Jews thought themselves *complete* in the ceremonial law; but we are *complete in Christ*, *ver. 10. That was imperfect and defective; if the first covenant had been faultless, there should no place have been sought for the second*, Heb. viii. 7. and the law was but a *shadow of good things, and could never, by those sacrifices, make the comers thereunto perfect*, Heb. x. 1. But all the defects of it are made up in the gospel of Christ, by the complete *sacrifice* for sin, and *revelation* of the will of God; which is the *head of all principality and power*. As the Old testament priesthood had its perfection in Christ; so likewise had the kingdom of David, which was the eminent principality and power under the Old Testament, and which the Jews valued themselves so much upon. And he is the Lord and head of all the powers in heaven and earth, of angels and men. *Angels and authorities, and powers are subject unto him*, 1 Pet. iii. 22.

2. We have communion with Christ in his whole undertaking, *ver. 12. Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him*. We are both *buried*, and *rise with him*, and both are signified by our baptism; not that there is any thing in the sign or ceremony of baptism, which represents this *burying* and *rising*, any more than the crucifixion of Christ is represented by any visible resemblance in the Lord's supper: and he is speaking of the *circumcision made without hands*; and says, it is *through the faith of the operation of God*. But the thing signified by our baptism, is, That we are buried with Christ, as baptism is the seal of the covenant, and an obligation to our dying to sin; and that we are risen with Christ, as it is a seal and obligation to our

living to righteousness, or newness of life. God in baptism engages to be to us a *God*, and we become engaged to be *his people*, and by his grace to *die* to sin, and to *live* to righteousness; or put off the old man, and put on the new.

13. And you being dead in your sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses, 14. Blotting out the hand-writing of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross: 15. And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

The apostle here represents the *privileges* we Christians have above the Jews, which are very great.

1. Christ's death is our life, *ver. 13. And you being dead in your sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him*. A state of sin is a state of spiritual death: They who are in sin, are dead in sin. As the death of the body consists in its separation from the soul, so the death of the soul consists in its separation from God, and the divine favour. As the death of the body is the corruption and putrefaction of it, so sin is the corruption or depravation of the soul. As a man who is dead, is unable to help himself by any power of his own; so an habitual sinner is morally impotent; though he has a natural power, or the power of a reasonable creature, he has not a spiritual power, till he has the divine life, or a renewed nature. It is principally to be understood of the Gentile world, who *lay in wickedness*. They were *dead in the uncircumcision of their flesh*, being *aliens to the covenant of promise, and without God in the world*, Eph. ii. 11, 12. By reason of their uncircumcision they were dead in their sins: It may be understood of the spiritual uncircumcision, or corruption of nature; and so it shews, that we are dead in law, and dead in state: Dead in law, as a *condemned malefactor* is called a *dead man*, because he is under a *sentence* of death; so sinners, by the guilt of sin, are under the sentence of the law, and *condemned already*, John iii. 18. And dead in state, by reason of the *uncircumcision of our flesh*: An unsanctified heart is called an *uncircumcised heart*. This is our state; now, through Christ, we who were dead in sins are *quickened*, i. e. effectual provision is made for the taking away the *guilt* of sin, and breaking the power and dominion of it. *Quickened together with him*; by virtue of our union to him, and in conformity to him. Christ's death was the death of our sins; Christ's resurrection is the quickening of our souls.

2. Through him we have the *remission* of sin. *Having forgiven you all trespasses*. This is our quickening: The pardon of the crime is the life of the criminal: and this is owing to the resurrection of Christ, as well as his death; for as he *died for our sins*, so he *rose again for our justification*, Rom. iv. 11.

3. Whatever is in force against us, is taken out of the way. He has obtained for us a legal discharge from the *hand-writing of ordinances, which was against us*, *ver. 14. which may be understood*, (1.) Of that obligation to punishment, in which consists the guilt of sin. The curse of the law, is the *hand-writing* against us, like the hand-writing on Belshazzar's wall. *Cursed is every one who continues not in every thing*: This was a hand-writing which was *against us, and contrary to us*; for it threatened our eternal ruin. This was removed, when he *redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us*, Gal. iii. 13. He cancelled the obligation for all who repent and believe. Upon me be the curse, my Father. He vacated and disannulled the judgment which was against us. When he was *nailed to the cross*, the curse was as it were *nailed to the cross*. And our indwelling corruption is crucified with Christ, and by the virtue of his cross. When we remember the *dying of the Lord Jesus*, and see him *nailed to the cross*, we should see the *hand-writing* against us *taken out of the way*. Or rather, (2.) It must be understood of the ceremonial law. The *hand-writing of ordinances*, i. e. the ceremonial institutions, or the law of commandments contained in ordinances, Eph. ii. 15. which was a *yoke* to the Jews, and a *partition-wall* to the Gentiles. The Lord Jesus *took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross*, i. e. *disannulled* the obligation of it, that all might see and be satisfied it was no more binding. When the *substance was come*, the *shadows* flee away. It is *abolished*, 2 Cor. iv. 13. and *that which decayeth and waxeth old, is ready to vanish away*, Heb. viii. 13. The expressions are in allusion to the ancient methods of cancelling a bond, either by crossing the writing, or striking it through with a nail.

4. He has obtained a glorious victory for us over the powers of darkness. *And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it*, *ver. 15. As the curse of the law was against us, so the power of Satan was against us*. He treated with God as the judge, and redeemed us out of the hands of his justice by a price; but out of the hands of Satan the executioner, he redeemed us by power, and with a high hand. *He led captivity captive*. The devil and all the powers of hell were conquered and disarmed by the dying Redeemer. The first promise pointed at this; the *bruising the heel* of Christ

in his sufferings, was the *breaking the serpent's head*, Gen. iii. 15. The expressions are lofty and magnificent; let us turn aside and see this great sight. The Redeemer conquered by dying: See his crown of thorns turned into a crown of laurels. He *spoiled them*, broke the devil's power, and conquered and disabled him, and made a *shew of them openly*; exposed them to publick shame, and made a shew of them to angels and men. Never had the devil's kingdom such a mortal blow given to it, as was given by the Lord Jesus. He tied them to his chariot-wheels, and rode forth conquering and to conquer; alluding to the custom of a general's triumph who returned victorious, *triumphing over them in it*, i. e. either in his cross, and by his death: or, as some read it, *in himself*; by his own power; for he *trode the wine-press alone*, and of the people there was none with him.

16. Let no man therefore judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of an holy-day, or of the new-moon, or of the sabbath-days: 17. Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ. 18. Let no man beguile you of your reward, in a voluntary humility, and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind; 19. And not holding the head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God. 20. Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world; why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, 21. (Touch not, taste not, handle not: 22. Which all are to perish with the using) after the commandments and doctrines of men? 23. Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body, not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.

The apostle concludes the chapter with exhortations to proper duty, which he infers from the foregoing discourse.

1. Here is a caution to take heed of Judaizing teachers, or those who would impose upon Christians the yoke of the ceremonial law. *Let no man therefore judge you in meat or in drink, &c.* ver. 16. Much of the ceremonies of the law of Moses consisted in the distinction of *meats* and *days*: It appears by *Rom. xiv.* there were such who were for keeping up those distinctions: But here the apostle shews, that since Christ is come, and hath cancelled the ceremonial law, we ought not to keep it up. Let no man impose those things upon you, for God hath not imposed them: if God has made you free, be not you again *entangled in that yoke of bondage*. And this the rather, because these things were *shadows of things to come*, ver. 17. intimating, that they had no intrinsic worth in them; and that they are now done away. But the *body is of Christ*: The body of which they were shadows is come; and to continue the ceremonial observances, which were only types and shadows of Christ and the gospel, carries an intimation that Christ is not yet come, and the gospel state not yet commenced. Observe the advantages we have under the gospel, above what they had under the law: They had the shadows, we the substance.

2. He cautions them to take heed of those who would introduce the worship of angels as mediators between God and them, as the Gentile philosophers did. *Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility, and worshipping of angels*, ver. 18. It looked like a piece of modesty to make use of the mediation of angels, as conscious to ourselves of our unworthiness to speak immediately to God: but though it has a *shew of humility*, it is a voluntary, not a commanded humility; and therefore it is not acceptable, yea, it is not warrantable. He takes that honour which is due to Christ only, and gives it to a creature. Besides, the notions upon which this practice was grounded, were merely the inventions of men, and not by divine revelation; the proud conceits of human reason, which makes men presume to dive into things, and determine them, without sufficient knowledge and warrant; *intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind*: Pretending to describe the orders of angels, and their respective ministries, which God hath hid from us; and therefore, though there was a shew of humility in the practice, there was a real pride in the principle. They advanced those notions to gratify their own carnal fancy, and were fond to be thought wiser than other people. Pride is at the bottom of a great many errors and corruptions, and even of many evil practices, which have a great shew and appearance of humility. They who do so, do *not hold the head*, ver. 19. i. e. They did, in effect, disclaim Christ, who is the only mediator between God and man. It is the highest disparagement to Christ, who is the head of the church, for any of the members of it to make use of any intercessors with God, but him. When men let go their hold of Christ, they catch at that which is next them, and will stand them in no stead. *From which all the body by joints and bands, having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth* No cxi.

with the increase of God. Observe, (1.) That Jesus Christ is not only a head of government over the church, but a head of vital influence to it. They are knit to him by joints and bands, as the several members of the body are united to the head, and receive life and nourishment from him. Observe, (2.) That the body of Christ is a growing body. *It increaseth with the increase of God*. The new man is increasing, and the nature of grace is to grow where there is not an accidental hindrance. *With the increase of God*; with an increase of grace which is from God as its author; or, in an usual Hebraism, with a large and abundant increase. *That ye may be filled with all the fulness of God*, Eph. iii. 19. See a parallel expression, *Which is the head even Christ, from whom the whole body fitly joined together, maketh increase of the body*, Eph. iv. 15, 16.

He takes occasion from hence to warn them again. *Wherefore if you be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world; why, as though living in the world; are ye subject to ordinances?* ver. 20. If as Christians you are dead to the observances of the ceremonial law, why are you subject to them? Such observances as *touch not, taste not, handle not*, ver. 21, 22. Under the law there was a ceremonial pollution contracted by touching a dead body, or any thing offered to an idol; or by tasting any forbidden meats, &c. *Which all are to perish with the using*; having no intrinsic worth in themselves to support them; and they who used them saw them perishing, and passing away: Or, which tends to corrupt the Christian faith, having no other authority than the traditions and injunctions of men. *Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will-worship and humility*. They thought themselves wiser than their neighbours in observing the law of Moses, together with the gospel of Christ, that they might be sure in the one, at least, to be in the right; but, alas, it was but a shew of wisdom, a mere invention and pretence. So they seemed to *neglect the body*; by abstaining from such and such meats, and mortifying their bodily pleasures and appetites: But there is nothing of true devotion in these things, for the gospel teaches us to worship God *in spirit and truth*, and not by ritual observances; and through the mediation of Christ alone, and not of any angels. Observe, (1.) That Christians are freed by Christ from the ritual observances of Moses's law; and delivered from that *yoke of bondage* which God himself had laid upon them. (2.) That subjection to ordinances, or human appointments in the worship of God, is highly blameable, and contrary to the freedom and liberty of the gospel. The apostle requires Christians, *to stand fast in the liberty with which Christ hath made them free, and not be entangled again with the yoke of bondage*, Gal. v. 1. And the imposing them is invading the authority of Christ, the head of the church, and *introducing another law of commandments contained in ordinances*, when Christ has *abolished the old one*, Eph. ii. 15. Observe, (3.) That such things have only a *shew of wisdom*, but are really folly. True wisdom is to keep close to the appointments of the gospel; and an entire subjection to Christ, the only head of the church.

CHAP. III.

The apostle exhorts to set our hearts upon heaven, and take them off from this world, ver. 1—4. He exhorts to the mortification of sin, in the various instances of it, ver. 5—12. and earnestly presses to mutual love and compassion, ver. 12—17. And concludes with exhortations to relative duties; of wives and husbands, parents and children, masters and servants, 18—25.

1. IF ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. 2. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. 3. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. 4. When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

The apostle having described our privileges by Christ in the former part of the epistle, and our discharge from the yoke of the ceremonial law; he comes here to press upon us our duty inferred from thence. Though we are made free from the obligation of the ceremonial law; it doth not therefore follow, that we may live as we list. We must walk the more closely with God in all the instances of evangelical obedience. He begins with exhorting them to set their hearts on heaven, and take them off from this world: *If ye then be risen with Christ*. It is our privilege, that we are *risen with Christ*, i. e. have benefit by the resurrection of Christ; and by virtue of our union and communion with him are justified and sanctified, and shall be glorified. From hence he infers, That we must *seek those things which are above*. We must mind the concerns of another world more than the concerns of this. We must make heaven our scope and aim, seek the favour of God above, keep up our communion with the upper world by faith and hope, and holy love; and make it our constant care and business to secure our title to the heavenly blifs. And the reason is, because *Christ sits at the right hand of God*. He

He who is our best friend, and our head, is advanced to the highest dignity and honour in heaven; and is gone before to secure to us the heavenly happiness: and therefore we should seek and secure what he has purchased at so vast expence, and is taking so much care about. We must live such a life as Christ lived here on earth, and lives now in heaven, according to our capacities.

He explains the duty, *ver. 2. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth.* Observe, To seek heavenly things is to set our affections upon them, to love them, and let out our desires towards them. Upon the wings of affection the heart soars upward, and is carried forth towards spiritual and divine objects. We must acquaint ourselves with them, and esteem them above all other things; and lay out ourselves in preparation for the enjoyment of them. David gave this proof of his *loving the house of God*; that he diligently sought after it, and prepared for it, *Psal. xxvii. 4.* This is to be *spiritually minded*, *Rom. viii. 6.* and to *seek and desire a better country, that is, an heavenly*, *Heb. xi. 14, 16.* Things on earth, are here set in opposition to things above. We must not dote upon them, nor expect too much from them, that we may set our affections on heaven; for heaven and earth are contrary one to the other, and a supreme regard to both is inconsistent; and the prevalence of our affection to one, will proportionably weaken and abate our affection to the other. He assigns three reasons for this, *ver. 3, 4.*

1. That we are dead; *i. e.* to present things, and as our portion. We are so in profession and obligation; for we are *buried with Christ, and planted into the likeness of his death.* Every Christian is *crucified unto the world, and the world is crucified unto him*, *Gal. vi. 14.* And if we are dead to the earth, and have renounced it as our happiness, it is absurd for us to set our affections upon it, and seek it. We should be like a dead thing to it, unmoved and unaffected towards it.

2. Our true life lies in the other world; *You are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God*, *ver. 3.* The new man hath its livelihood from thence. It is born and nourished from above; and the perfection of its life is reserved for that state. It is *hid with Christ*: not hid from us only, in point of secrecy; but hid for us, noting security. The life of a Christian is *hid with Christ.* *Because I live, ye shall live also*, *John xiv. 19.* Christ is at present a hidden Christ, or one *whom we have not seen*; but this is our comfort, that our life is *hid with him*, and laid up safe with him. As we have reason to love him *whom we have not seen*, *1 Pet. i. 8.* so we may take the comfort of a happiness out of sight, and reserved in heaven for us.

3. Because at the second coming of Christ we hope for the perfection of our happiness. If we live a life of Christian purity and devotion now, *when Christ who is our life shall appear, we shall also appear with him in glory*, *ver. 4.* Observe, (1.) Christ is a believer's life. *I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me*, *Gal. ii. 20.* He is the principle and end of the Christian's life. He lives in us by his Spirit, and we live to him in all we do. *To me to live is Christ*, *Phil. i. 20.* Observe, (2.) That Christ will appear again. He is now *hid*; and the heavens must contain him; but he will appear in all the pomp of the upper world, with his holy angels, and his own glory, and his Father's glory, *Mark viii. 38.* *Luke ix. 26.* Observe, (3.) That we shall then appear with him in glory. It will be his glory to have his redeemed with him; he will come to be glorified in his saints, *2 Theff. i. 10.* and it will be their glory to come with him, and be with him for ever. At the second coming of Christ there will be a general meeting of all the saints, and they whose life is now *hid with Christ*, shall then appear with Christ, in that glory which he himself enjoys, *John xvii. 24.* Do we look for such a happiness as that, and should we not set our affections upon that world, and live above this? What is there here to make us fond of it? What is there not there, to draw our hearts to it? Our head is there, our home is there, our treasure is there, and we hope to be there for ever.

5. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: 6. For which things sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience. 7. In the which ye also walked sometime when ye lived in them. 8. But now you also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. 9. Lye not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; 10. And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him. 11. Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.

The apostle exhorts the Colossians to the mortification of sin, the great hinderance to the seeking the things which are above.

Since it is our duty to set our affections upon heavenly things; it is our duty to mortify our members which are upon the earth, and which naturally incline us to the things of the world: mortify them, *i. e.* subdue the vicious habits of mind which prevailed in your Gentile state. Kill them, suppress them, as you do weeds or vermin which spread and destroy all about them, or as you kill an enemy which fights against you and wounds you. Your members which are upon the earth; either the members of the body which are the earthly part of us, and were curiously wrought in the lower parts of the earth, *Psal. cxxxix. 15.* Or the corrupt affections of the mind, which lead us to earthly things; the members of the body of death, *Rom. vii. 24.* He instances in,

1. The lusts of the flesh, for which they were before so very remarkable: *Fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence*; the various workings of the carnal appetite, and fleshly impurities, which they indulged in their former course of life, and which were so contrary to the Christian state, and the heavenly hope.

2. The love of the world: *and covetousness which is idolatry*; *i. e.* an inordinate love of present good and outward enjoyments, which proceeds from too high a value in the mind, puts upon too eager a pursuit, hinders the proper use and enjoyments, and creates anxious fear and immoderate sorrow for the loss of them. Observe, Covetousness is spiritual idolatry. It is giving that love and regard to worldly wealth, which is due to God only, and carries a greater degree of malignity in it, and is more highly provoking to God, than is commonly thought. And it is very observable, that among all the other instances of sin which good men are recorded in the scripture to have fallen into; and there is scarce any but some or other, in one or other part of their life, have fallen into; there is no instance in all the scripture of any good man, charged with covetousness.

He proceeds to shew how necessary it is to mortify sins, *ver. 6, 7.*

1. Because if we do not kill them, they will kill us, *ver. 6.* For which things sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience. See what we all are by nature more or less: we are children of disobedience: Not only disobedient children, but under the power of sin, and naturally prone to disobey. The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies, *Psal. lviii. 3.* And being children of disobedience, we are children of wrath, *Eph. ii. 3.* The wrath of God comes upon all the children of disobedience. They who do not obey the precepts of the law, incur the penalties of it. The sins he mentions were their sins in their heathen and idolatrous state, and they were then especially the children of disobedience; and yet these sins brought judgments upon them, and exposed them to the wrath of God.

2. We should mortify these sins, because they have lived in us, *ver. 7.* In the which ye also walked sometime, when ye lived in them. Observe, The consideration that we have formerly lived in sin, is a good argument why we should now forsake it. We have walked in by-paths, therefore let us walk in them no more. *If I have done iniquity, I will do no more*, *Job xxxiv. 32.* The time past of our lives may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when ye walked in lasciviousness, *1 Pet. iv. 3.* When ye lived among them who did such things: So some understand it, then ye walked in those evil practices. It is a hard thing to live among them who do the works of darkness, and not have fellowship with them, as it is to walk in the mire and contract no soil. Let us keep out of the way of evil doers.

And as we are to mortify inordinate appetites, so we are to mortify inordinate passions, *ver. 8.* But now you also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice: for these are contrary to the design of the gospel, as well as grosser impurities; and though they are more spiritual wickedness, have not less malignity in them. For the gospel religion introduces a change of the higher as well as the lower powers of the soul, and supports the dominion of right reason and conscience over appetite and passion. Anger and wrath are bad, but malice is worse, because it is more rooted and deliberate: It is anger heightened and settled.

And as the corrupt principles in the heart must be cut off, so the product of them in the tongue: As *blasphemy*, which seems here to mean, not so much speaking ill of God, as speaking ill of men; giving ill language to them, or raising ill reports of them, and injuring their good name by any evil arts, and filthy communication. All lewd and wanton discourse, which comes from a polluted mind in the speaker, and propagates the same defilements in the hearers. *Lying, lye not one to another*, *ver. 9.* For it is contrary both to the law of truth, and the law of love; and is both unjust and unkind, and naturally tends to destroy all faith and friendship among mankind. Lying makes us like the devil, who is the father of lies, and is a prime part of the devil's image upon our souls. And therefore we are cautioned against this sin by that general reason: seeing ye have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man. The consideration that we have by profession put away sin, and espoused the cause and interest of Christ, that we have renounced all sin, and stand engaged to Christ; should fortify us against this sin of lying. They who have put off the old man, have put it off with its deeds; and

and they who have put on the new man, must put on all its deeds: Not only espouse good principles, but act them in a good conversation. The new man is said to be renewed in knowledge; because an ignorant soul cannot be a good soul. *Without knowledge the heart cannot be good*, Prov. xix. 2. The grace of God works upon the will and affections, by renewing the understanding. Light is the first thing in the new creation, as it was in the first: *After the image of him who created him*. It was the honour of man in innocence that he was made after the image of God; but that image was defaced and lost by sin, and is renewed by sanctifying grace. So that a renewed soul is something like what Adam was in the day he was created.

In the privilege and duty of sanctification *there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free*, ver. 11. There is now no difference arising from different country, or different condition and circumstance of life: It is as much the duty of the one as of the other to be holy; and as much the privilege of the one as of the other, to receive from God the grace to be so. Christ came to take down all partition walls, that all might stand on the same level before God, both in duty and privilege. And for this reason, because *Christ is all in all*. Christ is a Christian's all, his only Lord and Saviour, and all his hope and happiness. And to those who are sanctified, one as well as another, and whatever they are in other respects; he is *all in all*, the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end: he is *all in all* things to them.

12. Put on therefore (as the elect of God, holy and beloved) bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; 13. Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. 14. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. 15. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. 16. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. 17. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

The apostle proceeds to exhort to mutual love and compassion. *Put on therefore bowels of mercy*, ver. 12. We must not only put off anger and wrath, as ver. 8. but we must put on bowels, and kindness; not only cease to do evil, but learn to do well: Not only, not do hurt to any; but do what good we can to all. The argument here used to enforce the exhortation is very affecting: *Put on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved*. Observe, (1.) That they who are holy are the elect of God; and they who are the elect of God and holy, are beloved: beloved of God, and ought to be so of all men. (2.) They who are the elect of God, *holy and beloved*, ought to carry themselves in every thing as becomes them; and so as not to lose the credit of their holiness, nor the comfort of their being chosen and beloved. It becomes those who are holy towards God, to be lowly and loving towards all men. Observe, What we must put on in particular. (1.) *Compassion* towards the miserable; *bowels of mercy*, i. e. the tenderest mercies. They who owe so much to mercy, ought to be merciful to all who are proper objects of mercy. *Be ye merciful, as your Father is merciful*, Luke vi. 26. (2.) *Kindness* towards our friends, and those who love us: A courteous disposition becomes the elect of God; for the design of the gospel is not only to soften the minds of men, but to sweeten them, and to promote friendship among men, as well as reconciliation with God. (3.) *Humbleness of mind*, in submission to those above us, and condescension to those below us. There must not only be a humble carriage, but a humble mind. *Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart*, Matt. xi. 29. (4.) *Meekness* towards those who have provoked us, or been any way injurious to us. We must not be transported into any indecency by our resentment of indignities and neglects; but must prudently bridle our own anger, and patiently bear the anger of others. (5.) *Long-suffering* toward those who continue to provoke us. *Charity suffereth long*, as well as is kind, 1 Cor. xiii. 4. Many can bear a short provocation, who are weary of bearing when it grows long. But we must suffer long both the injuries of men, and the rebukes of divine providence. If God is *long-suffering* to us, under all our provocations of him, we should exercise *long-suffering* to others in like cases. (6.) *Mutual forbearance*, in consideration of the infirmities and deficiencies which we all labour under; *forbearing one another*. We have all of us something which needs to be born with; and that is a good reason why we should bear with others in what is disagreeable to us. We need the same good turn from others, which we are obliged to shew them. (7.) A readiness to forgive injuries; *forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any*. While we are in this world,

where there is so much corruption in our hearts, and so much occasion of difference and contention; quarrels will sometimes happen even among the elect of God, who are *holy and beloved*; as Paul and Barnabas had a *sharp contention which parted them asunder one from the other*, Acts xv. 39. and Paul and Peter, Gal. ii. 14. But it is our duty to forgive one another in such cases; not to bear any grudge, but put up the affront, and pass it by. And the reason is; *Even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye*. The consideration that we are forgiven by Christ to many offences, is a good reason why we should forgive others. It is an argument of the divinity of Christ, that he had power on earth to forgive sins; and it is a branch of his example which we are obliged to follow, if we ourselves would be forgiven. *Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them who trespass against us*, Mat. vi. 12.

Now, in order to all this, we are exhorted here to several things:

1. To clothe ourselves with love, ver. 14. *Above all things put on charity*: Over all things, ἐπὶ πάντι δὲ τῷ αἵματι. Let this be the upper garment, the robe, the livery, the mark of our dignity and distinction. Or, let this be principal and chief, as the whole sum and abstract of the second table. *Add to faith virtue, and to brotherly kindness charity*, 2 Pet. i. 5, 6, 7. He lays the foundation in faith, and the top stone in charity, which is the bond of perfectness, the cement and center of all happy society. Christian unity consists in unanimity and mutual love.

2. To submit ourselves to the government of the peace of God, ver. 15. *Let the peace of God rule in your hearts*, i. e. God's being at peace with you, and the comfortable sense of his acceptance and favour: Or a disposition to peace among yourselves, a peaceable spirit, who keep the peace, and make peace. This is called the peace of God; because it is of his working in all who are his: *The kingdom of God is righteousness and peace*, Rom. xiv. 17. Let this peace rule in your heart; prevail and govern there; or umpire and decide all matters of difference among you. *To the which you are called in one body*. We are called to this peace, to peace with God as our privilege, and peace with our brethren as our duty. Being united in one body, we are called to be at peace one with another, as the members of the natural body; for *we are the body of Christ, and members in particular*, 1 Cor. xii. 27. And to preserve in us this peaceable disposition, we must be thankful: The work of thanksgiving to God is such a sweet and pleasant work, that it will help to make us sweet and pleasant towards all men. Instead of envying one another upon the account of any particular favours and excellence, be thankful for his mercies, which are common to all of you.

3. To let the word of Christ dwell in us richly, ver. 16. The gospel is the word of Christ, which is come to us; but that is not enough, it must dwell in us, or keep house; ἐνοικήτω; not as a servant in a family, who is under another's controul, but as a master, who has right to prescribe and direct to all under his roof. We must take our instructions and directions from it; and our portion of meat and strength, of grace and comfort, in due season, as from the master of the household. It must dwell in us, i. e. be always ready, and at hand to us in every thing, and have its due influence and use. We must be familiarly acquainted with it, and know it for our good, Job v. 27. It must dwell in us richly: Not only keep house in our hearts, but keep a good house. Many have the word of Christ dwelling in them, but it dwells in them but poorly; it hath no mighty force and influence upon them. Then the soul prospers, when the word of God dwells in us richly; when we have abundance of it in us, and are full of the scriptures, and of the grace of Christ. And this in all wisdom: The proper office of wisdom is to apply what we know to ourselves, for our own direction. The word of Christ must dwell in us, not in all notion and speculation, to make us doctors, but in all wisdom to make us good Christians, and enable us to carry ourselves in every thing as becomes wisdom's children.

4. To teach and admonish one another. This would contribute very much to our furtherance in all grace; for we sharpen ourselves by quickening others, and improve our knowledge by communicating it for others edification. We must admonish one another in psalms and hymns. Observe, That singing of psalms is a gospel-ordinance; ᾄδουσιν καὶ ὑμνοῖς καὶ ᾠδαῖς. The psalms of David, and spiritual hymns and odes, collected out of the scripture, and suited to special occasions, instead of their lewd and profane songs in their idolatrous worship. Religious poetry seems countenanced by these expressions, and is capable of great edification. But when we sing psalms, we make no melody, unless we sing with grace in our hearts, i. e. unless we are suitably affected with what we sing, and go along in it with true devotion and understanding. Singing of psalms is a teaching ordinance, as well as a praising ordinance; and we are not only to quicken and encourage ourselves, but to teach and admonish one another, mutually excite our affections, and convey instructions.

5. All must be done in the name of Christ, ver. 17. *And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus*: According to his command, and in compliance with his authority; by strength derived from him; with an eye to his glory; and depending upon his merit for the accepting of what is good, and

and pardon of what is amiss. *Giving thanks to God, and the Father by him.* Observe, (1.) That we must give thanks in all things, in *whatsoever* we do, we must still give thanks, *Eph. v. 20. Giving thanks always for all things.* (2.) That the Lord Jesus must be the mediator of our praises, as well as of our prayers. *We give thanks to God, and the Father in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Eph. v. 20.* They who do all things in Christ's name, will never want matter of thanksgiving to God, even the Father.

18. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord. 19. Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them. 20. Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well-pleasing unto the Lord. 21. Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged. 22. Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God: 23. And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; 24. Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. 25. But he that doth wrong, shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.

The apostle concludes the chapter with exhortations to relative duties, as before in the epistle to the Ephesians. The epistles which are most taken up in displaying the glory of the divine grace, and magnifying the Lord Jesus, are the most particular and distinct in pressing the duties of the several relations. We must never separate the privileges and duties of the gospel-religion.

1. He begins with the duties of wives and husbands, *ver. 18. Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.* Submission is the duty of wives, *ὑποτάσσεται*. It is the same word which is used to express our duty to magistrates, *Rom. xiii. 1. Let every soul be subject to the higher powers,* and is expressed by subjection and reverence, *Eph. v. 24, 33.* The reason is, That *Adam was first formed, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression, 1 Tim. ii. 13, 14.* He was first in the creation, and last in the transgression. And the *head of the woman is the man; and the man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man; neither was the man created for the woman, but the woman for the man, 1 Cor. xi. 3, 8, 9.* It is agreeable to the order of nature, and the reason of things; as well as the appointment and will of God. But then it is submission, not to a rigorous lord or absolute tyrant, who may do his will, and is without restraints; but to a husband, and to *her own husband*; who stands in the nearest relation, and is under strict engagements to proper duty too. And *this is fit in the Lord.* It is becoming the relation, and what they are bound in duty to do, as an instance of obedience to the authority and law of Christ.

On the other hand, *husbands must love their wives, and not be bitter against them, ver. 19.* They must love them with tender and faithful affection, as *Christ loved the church, and as their own bodies; and even as himself, Eph. v. 25, 28, 33.* With a love peculiar to the nearest relation, and the greatest comfort and blessing of life. And they must not be bitter against them; or use them unkindly with harsh language, or severe treatment; but be kind and obliging to them in all things: For the *woman was made for the man, neither is the man without the woman, and the man also is by the woman, 1 Cor. xi. 9, 11, 12.*

2. The duties of children and parents. *Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing unto the Lord, ver. 20.* They must be willing to do all their lawful commands, and be at their direction and disposal; as those who have a natural right, and are fitter to direct them themselves. The apostle, *Eph. vi. 2.* requires them to honour as well as obey their parents; they must esteem them, and think honourably of them; as the obedience of their lives must proceed from the esteem and opinion of their minds. And this is *well-pleasing to God, or acceptable to him; for it is the first commandment with promise, Eph. vi. 2.* With an explicit promise annexed to it, *viz. That it shall be well with them, and they shall live long on the earth.* Dutiful children are the most likely to prosper in the world, and enjoy long life.

And parents must be tender, as well as children obedient, *ver. 21. Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.* Let not your authority over them be exercised with rigour and severity, but with kindness and gentleness; lest you raise their passions, and discourage them in their duty; and by holding the reins too strait, make them fly out with the greater fierceness. The ill temper and example of imprudent parents, is often a great hindrance to their children, and a stumbling-block in their way; see *Eph. vi. 4.* And it is by the tenderness of parents, and dutifulness of children, that God ordinarily furnishes

his church with a seed to serve him, and propagates religion from age to age.

3. Servants and masters. *Servants, obey your masters in all things according to the flesh, ver. 22.* Servants must do the duty of the relation in which they stand, and obey their masters commands in *all things*, which are consistent with their duty to God their heavenly Master. *Not with eye-service, as men-pleasers:* Not only when their master's eye is upon them, but when they are from under their master's eye. They must be both just and diligent. *In singleness of heart fearing God:* Without selfish designs, or hypocrisy and disguise, as those who fear God and stand in awe of him. Observe, That the fear of God ruling in the heart, will make people good in every relation. Servants who fear God will be just and faithful when they are from under their master's eye, because they know they are under the eye of God, *Gen. xx. 11. Because I thought, surely the fear of God is not in this place. Neh. v. 15. But so did not I, because of the fear of God.* And *whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, ver. 23. i. e.* With diligence, not idly and slothfully: Or, do it cheerfully, not discontented at the providence of God, which put you in that relation. *As to the Lord, and not as to men.* It sanctifies a servant's work, when it is done *as unto God; i. e.* with an eye to his glory, and in obedience to his command; and not merely *as unto men*, or with regard to them only. Observe, We are really doing our duty to God, when we are faithful in our duty to men. And for servants encouragement, let them know, that a good and faithful servant is never the further from heaven, for his being a servant: *Knowing that of the Lord you shall receive the reward of the inheritance, for you serve the Lord Christ, ver. 24.* Serving your masters according to the command of Christ, you serve Christ, and he will be your pay-master: You will have a glorious reward at last. Though you are now servants, you shall receive the inheritance of sons. But, on the other hand, *He who doth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done, ver. 25.* There is a righteous God, who if servants wrong their masters, will reckon with them for it, though they may conceal it from their notice. And he will be sure to punish the unjust, as well as reward the faithful servant. And so if masters wrong their servants. *And there is no respect of persons with him.* The righteous judge of the earth will be impartial, and carry it with an equal hand towards master and servant; not swayed by any regards to mens outward circumstances and condition of life. The one and the other will stand upon a level at his tribunal.

It is probable the apostle has a particular respect in all these instances of duty to the case mentioned, *1 Cor. vii.* of relations of a different religion, as a Christian, and heathen, a Jewish convert, and an uncircumcised Gentile; where there was room to doubt whether they were obliged to the proper duties of their several relations to such persons. And if it hold in such cases, it is much stronger upon Christians one towards another, and where both are of the same religion. And how happy would the gospel-religion make the world, if it every where prevailed; and how much would it influence every state of things, and every relation of life?

C H A P. IV.

He continues his account of the duty of masters, from the close of the former chapter, *ver. 1, 2. Exhorts to the duty of prayer, ver. 3, 4. And to a prudent and decent carriage towards those with whom we converse, ver. 5, 6. Closes the epistle with the mention of several of his friends, of whom he gives an honourable testimony, ver. 7—18.*

1. **M**ASTERS, give unto your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.

The apostle proceeds with the duty of masters to their servants, which might have been joined to the foregoing chapter, and is a part of that discourse. Here observe,

1. That justice is required of them: *Give unto your servants that which is just and equal, ver. 1.* Not only strict justice, but equity and kindness. Be faithful to your promises to them, and perform your agreements; not defrauding them of their dues, or *keeping back by fraud the hire of the labourers, Jam. v. 4.* Require no more of them than they are able to perform; and do not lay unreasonable burdens upon them, and beyond their strength: Provide for them what is fit, and take care of proper food and physick; and allow them such liberties as may enable them the better for cheerful service, and make it the easier to them. And this, though they are employed in the meanest and lowest office, and are of another country, and a different religion from yourselves.

2. A good reason for this regard: *Knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.* You who are masters of others, have a master yourself, and are servants of another lord. You are not lords of yourselves, and are accountable to one above you. Do you deal with your servants, as you expect God should deal

with you; and as those who believe you must give an account. You are both servants of the same Lord in the different relations in which you stand, and are equally accountable to him at last. *Knowing that your master is in heaven, neither is there respect of persons with him,* Eph. vi. 9.

2. Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving; 3. Withal, praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds: 4. That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.

If this is considered as connected with the foregoing verse, then we may observe, that it is part of the duty which masters owe their servants to pray with them, and to pray daily with them, or *continue in prayer*. They must not only do justly and kindly by them, but act a Christian and religious part, and be concerned for their souls as well as their bodies; as parts of your charge, and under your influence. Be concerned for the blessing of God upon them, as well as the success of your affairs in their hands. And this is the duty of every one; to *continue in prayer*: Keep up your constant times of prayer without being diverted from it by other business; keep your hearts close to the duty, without wandering or deadness; and even to the end of it. *Watching in the same*. Christians should lay hold on all opportunities for prayer, and chuse the fittest seasons, which are least liable to disturbance from other things, and keep their minds lively in the duty, and in suitable frames. *With thanksgiving*; or solemn acknowledgment of the mercies received. Thanksgiving must have a part in every prayer.

Withal praying also for us, ver. 3. The people must pray particularly for their ministers, and bear them upon their hearts at all times at the throne of grace, *q. d.* Do not forget us whenever you pray for yourselves, Eph. vi. 19. 1 *Theff.* v. 25. *Heb.* xiii. 18. *That God would open to us a door of utterance*, i. e. Either afford opportunity to preach the gospel; so he says, *a great door, and effectual is opened to me*, 1 Cor. xvi. 9. Or else, give me ability and courage, and enable me with freedom and faithfulness, so Eph. vi. 19. *And for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to speak the mystery of Christ for which I am also in bonds*, i. e. Either the deepest doctrines of the gospel with plainness; of which Christ is the principal subject; he calls it, the *mystery of the gospel*, Eph. vi. 19. Or else he means the preaching of the gospel to the Gentile world, which he calls the *mystery hid from ages*, chap. i. 26. and the *mystery of Christ*, Eph. iii. 4. For this he was now in bonds: He was a prisoner at Rome by the violent opposition of the malicious Jews. He would have them pray for him, that he might not be discouraged in his work, or driven from it by his sufferings. *That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak*, ver. 4. That I may make this mystery known to those who have not heard of it; and make it plain to their understanding, in such a manner as I ought to do. He had been particular in telling them what he prayed for them, chap. i. Here he tells them particularly what he would have them pray for him. Paul knew as well as any man how to speak, and yet he begs their prayers for him, that he might be taught to speak. The best and most eminent Christians need the prayers of meaner Christians, and are not above asking them. The chief speakers need prayer, that God would give them a *door of utterance*, and that they may speak as they ought to speak.

5. Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. 6. Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.

The apostle exhorts them further to a prudent and decent carriage toward all those with whom they converse. Towards the heathen world, or those out of the Christian church, among whom they lived, ver. 5. *Walk in wisdom towards them who are without*: Be careful in all your converse with them, to get no hurt by them, or contract any of their customs; for *evil communications corrupt good manners*; and to do no hurt to them, or increase their prejudices against religion, and give them an occasion of dislike. Yea, do them all the good you can, and by all the fittest means, and in the proper seasons recommend religion to them. *Redeeming the time*, i. e. either improving every opportunity of doing them good; and making the best use of our time in proper duty; diligence in redeeming time does very much recommend religion to the good opinion of others: Or else walking cautiously and with circumspection, to give them no advantage against you, or expose yourselves to their malice and ill will, Eph. v. 15, 16. *Walk circumspectly, redeeming the time, because the days are evil*, i. e. dangerous, or times of trouble and suffering.

And towards others, are those who are within, as well as those who are without. Let your speech be always with grace, ver. 6. Let all your discourse be as becomes Christians, and with a de-

cency to your profession; favoury, discreet, seasonable. Though it be not always of grace, it must be always with grace; and though the matter of our discourse be that which is common, yet there must be an air of piety upon it, and it must be in a Christian manner, *seasoned with salt*. Grace is the salt which seasons our discourse, and makes it favoury, and keeps it from corrupting. *That you may know how you ought to answer every man*. One answer is proper for one man, and another for another man, *Prov.* xxvi. 4, 5. We have need of a great deal of wisdom and grace to give proper answers to every man: particularly in answering the questions and objections of adversaries against our religion; giving the reasons of our faith, and shewing the unreasonableness of their exceptions and cavils, to the best advantage to our cause, and least prejudice to ourselves. *Be ready always to give an answer to every man, who asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear*, 1 Pet. iii. 15.

7. All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, who is a beloved brother, and a faithful minister, and fellow-servant in the Lord: 8. Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he might know your estate, and comfort your hearts: 9. With Onesimus a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They shall make known unto you all things which are done here. 10. Aristarchus my fellow-prisoner saluteth you, and Marcus sifter's son to Barnabas (touching whom ye received commandments; if he come unto you, receive him) 11. And Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision. These only are my fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me. 12. Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. 13. For I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them that are in Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis. 14. Luke the beloved physician, and Demas greet you. 15. Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house. 16. And when this epistle is read amongst you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea. 17. And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it. 18. The salutation by the hand of me Paul. Remember my bonds. Grace be with you. Amen.

In the close of this epistle the apostle does several of his friends the honour to leave their names upon record, with some testimony of his respect, which will be spoken of wherever the gospel comes, and last to the end of the world.

1. Concerning Tychicus, ver. 7. By him this epistle was sent, and he does not give them an account in writing of his present state, because Tychicus would do it by word of mouth more fully and particularly. He knew they would be glad to hear how it fared with him. The churches cannot but be concerned for good ministers, and desirous to know their state. He gives him this character, *A beloved brother and faithful minister*. Paul, though a great apostle, owns a faithful minister for a brother, and a beloved brother. Faithfulness in any one is truly lovely, and renders him worthy our affection and esteem. *And a fellow-servant in the Lord*. Ministers are servants to Christ, and fellow-servants to one another. They have one Lord, though they have different stations and capacities of service. Observe, It adds much to the beauty and strength of the gospel-ministry, when ministers are thus loving and condescending one to another; and by all just means support and advance one another's reputation. Paul sent him not only to tell them of his affairs, but to bring him an account of theirs: *Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he might know your estate, and comfort your hearts*, ver. 8. He was as willing to hear from them as they could be to hear from him; and thought himself as much obliged to sympathize with them, as he thought them obliged to sympathize with him. It is a great comfort under the troubles and difficulties of life to have the mutual concern of fellow-Christians.

2. Concerning Onesimus, ver. 9. *With Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you*. He was sent back from Rome along with Tychicus. This was he whom Paul had begotten in his bonds, Philemon 10. and had been servant to Philemon, and who was a member if not a minister of their church. He was converted at Rome, whither he had fled from his master's service, and is now sent back, it is probable, with the epistle to Philemon, to introduce him again into his master's family. Observe, Though he was a poor servant, and had been an ill man, yet being now a convert, Paul calls him a *faithful and beloved brother*. The meanest circumstance of life, and greatest wicked-

ness of former life, makes no difference in the spiritual relation among sincere Christians: They partake of the same privileges, and are entitled to the same regards. *The righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ is unto all, and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference, Rom. iii. 22. and there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus, Gal. iii. 28.* Perhaps this was some time after he was converted, and sent back to Philemon; and that by this time he was entered into the ministry, because Paul calls him a brother.

3. *Aristarchus, a fellow-prisoner.* They who join in services and sufferings, should be thereby engaged to one another in holy love and endeared to one another. Paul had a particular affection for his fellow-servants and his fellow-prisoners.

4. *Marcus, Sister's son to Barnabas.* This is supposed to be the same who wrote the gospel which bears his name. *If he come unto you, receive him.* Paul had a quarrel with Barnabas upon the account of this Mark, who was his nephew, and *thought not good to take him with them, because he departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work, Acts xv. 38.* He would not take Mark with him, but took Silas, because Mark had deserted them; and yet Paul is not only reconciled to him himself, but recommends him to the respects of the churches, and gives a great example of the truly Christian and forgiving spirit. If men have been guilty of a fault, it must not be always remembered against them. We must forget as well as forgive. *If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye who are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, Gal. vi. 1.*

5. Here is one who is called Jesus, which is the Greek name for the Hebrew Joshua: *If Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterwards have spoken of another day; Heb. iv. 8. Who is called Justus.* It is likely he changed it for the name of Justus, in honour to the name of the Redeemer: Or else Jesus was his Jewish name, for he was of the circumcision; and Justus his Roman or Latin name. *These are my fellow-labourers unto the kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me.* Observe, What comfort the apostle had in the communion of saints and ministers. One is his fellow-servant, another his fellow-prisoner, and all his fellow-workers, i. e. who are working out their own salvation, and endeavouring to promote the salvation of others. Good ministers take great comfort in those who are their fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God. Their friendship and converse together is a great refreshment under the sufferings and difficulties in their way.

6. *Epaphras, ver. 12.* the same with Epaphroditus. He is one of you; one of your church, *he saluteth you,* or sends his service to you, and his best affections and wishes. *Always labouring fervently for you in prayers.* Epaphras had learned of Paul to be much in prayer for his friends. Observe,

(1.) In what manner he prayed for them. He laboured in prayer; and laboured fervently; and always laboured fervently for them. They who would succeed in prayer must take pains in prayer; and we must be earnest in prayer, not only for our selves, but for others also. It is the *effectual fervent* prayer which is the prevailing prayer, and *availeth much, Jam. v. 16. and Elias prayed earnestly that it might not rain, ver. 17.*

(2.) What is the matter of this prayer; *That ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.* Observe, To stand perfect and complete in the will of God, is what we should earnestly desire both for our selves and others: We must stand complete in all the will of God; in the will of his precepts, by an universal obedience; and in the will of his providence, by a cheerful submission to it: And we stand perfect and complete in both by constancy and perseverance unto the end.

The apostle was witness for Epaphras, that *he had a great zeal for them: I bear him record; I can testify for him that he has a great concern for you, and that all he does for you proceeds from a warm desire for your good.* And his zeal extended to all about them; to *them who are in Laodicea and Hierapolis:* He had a great concern for the Christian interest in the neighbouring places, as well as among them.

7. *Luke* is another here mentioned, whom he calls *a beloved physician.* This is he who wrote the *gospel* and *Acts*, and was

Paul's companion. Observe, He was both a physician and an evangelist. Christ himself both taught and healed, and was a great physician as well as prophet of the church. He was the beloved physician; one who recommended himself more than ordinary to the affections of his friends. Skill in physick is a useful accomplishment in a minister, and may be improved to more extensive usefulness and greater esteem among Christians.

8. *Demas.* Whether this was written before the second epistle to Timothy, or after, is not certain: There we read, *2 Tim. iv. 11. Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world.* Some have thought that this epistle was written after, and then it is an evidence, that though Demas forsook Paul, yet he did not forsake Christ; or he forsook him but for a time, and recovered himself again, and Paul forgave him, and owned him as a brother. But others think more probably, that this epistle was writ before the other; this in *anno* 62. that in 66. and then it is an evidence how considerable a man Demas was, who yet afterwards revolted. Many who have made a great figure in profession, and gained a great name among Christians, have yet shamefully apostatized. *They went forth from us, because they were not of us; 1 John ii. 19.*

9. The *brethren in Laodicea* are here mentioned, as living in the neighbourhood of Colosse; and Paul sends *salutations* to them, and orders *that this epistle should be read in the church of the Laodiceans, ver. 16.* That a copy of it should be sent there to be read publicly in their congregation. And some think Paul sent another epistle at this time to Laodicea, and ordered them to send for that from Laodicea, and read it in their church: *And that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.* If so, that epistle is now lost, and did not belong to the canon; for all the epistles which the apostles ever wrote were not preserved, any more than all the words and actions of our blessed Lord: *There are many other things which Jesus did, the which if they should be written every one, I suppose the world itself could not contain the books which should be written; John xxi. 25.* But some think it was the epistle to the Ephesians, which is still extant.

10. *Nymphas* is mentioned, *ver. 15.* as one who lived at Colosse, and had a *church in his house,* i. e. either a religious family where the several parts of worship were daily performed; or some part of the congregation met there, when they had no publick places of worship allowed, and they were forced to assemble in private houses for fear of their enemies: *The disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, John xx. 19.* and the apostle preached in his own lodging and hired house, *Acts xxviii. 23, 30.* In the former sense it shewed his exemplary piety; in the latter his zeal and publick spirit.

11. Concerning *Archippus*, who was one of their ministers at Colosse: They are bid to admonish him to mind his work as a minister, to *take heed to it, and to fulfil it;* to be diligent and careful of all the parts of it and to persevere in it unto the end. They must attend to the main design of their ministry, without troubling themselves or the people with things foreign to it, or of less moment. Observe, (1.) That the ministry we have received is a great honour; for it is *received in the Lord,* and is by his appointment and command. (2.) That they who have received it must fulfil it, or do the full duty of it. They betray their trust, and will have a sad account at last, who *do this work of the Lord negligently.* (3.) That their people may put their ministers in mind of their duty, and excite them to it. *Say to Archippus, take heed to the ministry;* though no doubt with decency and respect, nor from pride and conceit.

12. Concerning Paul himself, *ver. 18. The salutation of me Paul: Remember my bonds.* He had a scribe to write all the rest of the epistle, but these words he wrote with his own hand: *Remember my bonds:* He doth not say, remember I am a prisoner, and send me supply; but remember I am in bonds as the apostle of the Gentiles, and let that confirm your faith in the gospel of Christ: It adds weight to his exhortation; *I therefore the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy, Eph. iv. 1. Grace be with you.* The free favour of God; and all good, the blessed fruits and effects of it, be with you, and be your portion.

A N

E X P O S I T I O N

O F T H E

First Epistle of St. *Paul* to the *THESSALONIANS*,

W I T H

P R A C T I C A L O B S E R V A T I O N S.

Thessalonica was formerly the metropolis of Macedonia; it is now called Salonichi, and is the best peopled, and one of the best towns for commerce in the Levant. The apostle Paul being diverted from his design of going into the provinces of Asia, properly so called, and directed after an extraordinary manner to preach the gospel in Macedonia, Acts xvi. 9, 10. in obedience to the call of God went from Tarsus to Samothracia, and from thence to Neapolis, and from thence to Philippi, where he had good success in his ministry; but met with hard usage, being cast into prison with Silas his companion in travels and labour, from whence being wonderfully delivered, they comforted the brethren there and departed. Passing through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where the apostle planted a church that consisted of some believing Jews, and many converted Gentiles, Acts xvii. 1—4. But a tumult being raised in the city by the unbelieving Jews, and the lewd and baser sort of the inhabitants; Paul and Silas, for their safety, were sent away by night unto Berea: and afterwards Paul was conducted to Athens, leaving Silas and Timotheus behind him, but sent directions that they should come to him with all speed.

When they were come, Timotheus was sent to Thessalonica to enquire after their welfare, and to establish them in the faith, 1 Thess. iii. 2. who returned to Paul while he tarried at Athens, and was sent again together with Silas to visit the churches in Macedonia. So that Paul being left at Athens alone, 1 Thess. iii. 2. departed from thence to Corinth, where he continued a year and a half; in which time Silas and Timotheus returned to him from Macedonia, Acts xviii. 5. and then he wrote this epistle to the church of Christ at Thessalonica; which, though it is placed after the other epistles of this apostle, is supposed to be first in time of all Paul's epistles, and to be written about A. D. 51.

The main scope whereof is to express the thankfulness of this apostle for the good success his preaching had among them, and to establish them in the faith, and persuade them to a holy conversation.

C H A P. I.

After the introduction, ver. 1. the apostle begins with a thanksgiving to God for the saving benefits bestowed on them, ver. 2—5. And then mentions the sure evidences of the good success of the gospel among them, which was notorious and famous in several other places, ver. 6—10.

1. **P**AUL, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians, *which is in God the Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

In this introduction we have,

1. The *inscription*; where we have,
(1.) The persons *from whom* this epistle came, or by whom it was written: Paul was the inspired apostle and writer of this epistle, though he maketh no mention of his apostleship, which was not doubted of by the Thessalonians, nor opposed by any false apostles among them. He joins Silvanus [or Silas] and Timotheus with himself (who were now come to him with an account of the prosperity of the churches in Macedonia) which sheweth this great apostle's humility, and how desirous he was to put honour upon the ministers of Christ that were of an inferior rank and standing; a good example this is to such ministers as are of greater abilities and reputation in the church than some others.

(2.) The persons *to whom* this epistle is written, namely, the church of the Thessalonians, *i. e.* the converted Jews and Gentiles in Thessalonica: and it is observable that this church is said *be in God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ*: They had fellowship with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ, 1 John i. 3. Therefore they were a Christian church, because they believed in God the Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ. They believed the principles both of natural and revealed religion. The Gentiles among them were turned *to God from idols*, and the Jews among them believed Jesus to be the promised Messiah. All of them were devoted and dedicated to God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. *To God* as their chiefest good and highest end: *To Jesus Christ* as their lord and mediator between God and man. God the Father is the original and center of all *natural* religion; and Jesus Christ is the author and center of all *revealed* religion. *Ye believe in God*, saith our Saviour, *believe also in me*, John xiv. 1.

2. The *salutation* or apostolical benediction. *Grace be with you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.* This is the same for substance as in the other epistles. Grace and peace are well joined together; for the free grace and favour of God is the spring and fountain of all that peace and prosperity we do or can enjoy; and where there are gracious dispositions in us, we may hope for peaceful thoughts in our own breasts: both grace and peace, and all spiritual blessings do come to us from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ; from God the *original* of all good, and from the Lord Jesus the *purchaser* of all good for us. From God in Christ, and so *our Father* in covenant, because he is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Note, As *all* good cometh from God, so *no* good can be hoped for by sinners but from God in Christ. And the *best* good may be expected from God as our Father, for the sake of Christ.

2. We

2. We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, 3. Remembering without ceasing, your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God, and our Father: 4. Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. 5. For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.

(1.) The apostle begins with thanksgiving unto God. Being about to mention the things that were matter of joy to him, and highly praise-worthy in them, and greatly for their advantage, he chooseth to do this by way of *thanksgiving to God*, who is the author of all that good that cometh to us, or is done by us at any time. God is the object of all religious worship, of prayer and praise. And thanksgiving to God is a great duty to be performed always, or constantly; even when we do not actually give thanks to God by our words, we should have a grateful sense of God's goodness upon our minds. Thanksgiving should be often repeated; and not only should we be thankful for the favours we ourselves do receive, but for benefits bestowed on others also; upon our fellow-creatures and fellow-Christians. The apostle gave thanks not only for those that were his most intimate friends, or most eminently favoured of God, but for *them all*.

(2.) He joined prayer with his praise or thanksgiving: When we do *in every thing by prayer and supplication make our requests known to God*, we should join *thanksgiving* therewith, *Phil. iv. 6*. So when we give thanks for any benefit we receive, we should join prayer. We should *pray always, and without ceasing*; and should pray not only for *ourselves*, but for *others* also; for our friends, and should *make mention* of them in our prayers. We may sometimes mention their *names*, and should make mention of their *case* and condition; at least we should have their persons and circumstances in our minds; *remembering* them without ceasing.

Note, As there is much that we ought to be thankful for on the behalf of ourselves, and our friends, so there is much occasion of constant prayer for further supplies of good.

(3.) He mentions the particulars for which he was so thankful to God. Namely,

First, The saving *benefits bestowed* on them. These were the grounds and reasons of his thanksgiving, *e. g.*

(1.) Their *faith*, and their *work* of faith. This he tells them, *ver. 8*. was very famous and spread abroad. This is the radical grace, and their faith was a true and living faith, because a working faith. Note, Wherever there is a true faith, it will work. It will have an influence upon heart and life; it will put us upon working for God and for our own salvation. Then we have comfort in our *own* faith, and the faith of *others*, when we perceive the *work of faith*. *Shew me thy faith by thy works*, *Jam. ii. 18*.

(2.) Their *love*, and the *labour* of love. Love is one of the cardinal graces, and of great use to us in this life, and will remain and be perfected in the life to come. *Faith works by love*. It shews itself in the exercise of love to God, and love to our neighbour. As love will shew itself by labour, it will put us upon taking pains in religion.

(3.) Their *hope*, and the *patience* of hope. *We are saved by hope*. This grace is compared to the soldier's helmet and sailor's anchor, and is of great use in times of danger. And wherever there is a well-grounded hope of eternal life, that will appear by the exercise of patience; in a patient bearing the calamities of the present time, and a patient waiting for the glory to be revealed: *For if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it*, *Rom. viii. 15*.

(4.) The apostle not only mentions these three cardinal graces, faith, hope, and love, but also taketh notice,

1. Of the *object* and *efficient cause* of these graces, *viz.* our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. Of the *sincerity* of them, being in the *sight of God even our Father*. The great motive to sincerity is the apprehension of God's eye as always upon us; and it is a sign of sincerity, when in all we do we endeavour to approve our selves to God; and that is right which is so in the sight of God. Then is the work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope sincere, when it is done as under the eye of God.

3. He mentions the *fountain* from whence these graces did flow, *viz.* God's *electing love*. *Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God*, *ver. 4*. Thus he runs up these streams to the fountain, and that was God's *eternal* election. Some by their election of God would understand only the *temporary* separation of the Thessalonians from the unbelieving Jews and Gentiles in their conversion; but this was according to the *eternal purpose of him who worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will*, *Ephes. i. 11*. And speaking of their election, he calls them, *brethren, beloved*: for the original of the brotherhood that is between Christians, and the relation wherein they stand one to another, is election. And that is a good reason why we should love one

another, because we are all *loved of God*, and were loved of him in his counsels, when there was not any thing in us to merit his love. The election of these Thessalonians was *known to the apostle*, and therefore might be *known to themselves*, and that by the fruits and effects thereof, *viz.* their sincere faith, and hope, and love; by the successful preaching of the gospel among them.

Observe, 1. That all those who in the fulness of time are effectually called and sanctified, were from eternity elected and chosen to salvation.

2. That the election of God is of his own good pleasure and mere grace, not for the sake of any merit in them that are chosen.

3. That the election of God may be known by the fruits thereof.

4. That whenever we are giving of thanks to God for his grace either to ourselves or others, we should run up the streams to the fountain, and give thanks to God for his electing love by which we are made to differ.

Secondly, Another ground or reason of the apostle's thanksgiving, is the *success of his ministry* among them. He was thankful on his account as well as theirs, that he had not *laboured in vain*. He had the seal and evidence of his apostleship hereby, and great encouragement in his labours and sufferings. Their ready acceptance and entertainment of the gospel he preached to them, was an evidence of their being elected and beloved of God. It was by this way he knew their election. It is true, he had been in the *third heavens*, but had not searched the records of eternity, and found their election there; but knew this by the success of the gospel among them, *ver. 5*. and he taketh notice with thankfulness,

(1.) That the gospel came to them also not in *word only* but in *power*, i. e. they did not only hear the *sound* of it, but submitted to the *power* of it. It did not only tickle the ear, and please the fancy; not only fill their heads with notions, and amuse their minds for a while, but did affect their hearts: a divine power went along with it for the convincing their consciences, and amending their lives. Note, That by this we may know our election, if we not only speak of the things of God by rote, as parrots, but feel the influence of those things in our hearts, mortifying our lusts, and weaning us from the world, and raising us up to heavenly things.

(2.) It came in the *Holy Ghost*, i. e. with the powerful energy of the divine Spirit. Note, Wherever the gospel comes in power, it is to be attributed to the operation of the Holy Ghost; and unless the Spirit of God accompanies the word of God, to render it effectual by his power, it will be to us but *as a dead letter*, and the *letter killeth, it is the Spirit giveth life*.

(3.) The gospel came to them in *much assurance*. Thus did they entertain it by the power of the Holy Ghost: They were fully convinced of the truth of it, so as not to be easily shaken in mind by objections and doubts; they were willing to leave all for Christ, and to venture their souls and everlasting condition upon the verity of the gospel-revelation: The word was not to them like the sentiments of some philosophers about matters of opinion, and doubtful speculation, but the object of their faith and assurance. Their *faith was the evidence of things not seen*; and the Thessalonians did thus *know what manner of men* the apostle and his fellow-labourers *were among them*, and what they did for their sake, and with what good success.

6. And ye become followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy in the holy Ghost: 7. So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. 8. For from you sounded out the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to Godward is spread abroad, so that we need not to speak any thing. 9. For they themselves shew of us, what manner of entering in we had unto you, you, and how ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God; 10. And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he had raised from the dead, *even Jesus* which delivered us from the wrath to come.

In these words we have the evidence of the apostle's success among these Thessalonians, which were notorious and famous in several places. For,

(1.) They were careful in their holy conversation to imitate the good examples of the apostles and ministers of Christ, *ver. 6*. As the apostle took care to demean himself well, not only for his *own credit's* sake, but for the *benefit of others*, by a conversation suitable to his doctrine, that he might not pull down with one hand what he builded up with the other; so the Thessalonians who observed what manner of men they were among them, how their preaching and living was all of a piece, shewed a conscientious care to be *followers of them*, i. e. to imitate their good example: And herein they became also followers of *the Lord*, who is the perfect example we must strive to imitate, and we should be followers of others no further than they are followers of

of Christ, 1 Cor. xi. 1. and the Thessalonians acted thus notwithstanding their afflictions, that *much* affliction the apostles and themselves also were exposed to. They were willing to share in the sufferings that attended the embracing and professing Christianity. They entertained the gospel, notwithstanding the troubles and hardships which attended the preachers and professors of it too. Perhaps this made the word more precious, being dear bought; and the examples of the apostles shined very bright under their afflictions; so that the Thessalonians embraced the word cheerfully, and followed the example of the suffering apostles joyfully, *with joy in the Holy Ghost*; such solid and spiritual and lasting joy as the Holy Ghost is the author of, who when our afflictions do abound, maketh our consolations much more abound.

(2.) Their zeal prevailed to that degree, that they were themselves examples to all about them, *ver. 7, 8.*

Observe here,

1. Their example was very *effectual* to make good impressions upon many others. They were *τυποί*, stamps or instruments to make impression with. They had themselves received good impressions from the preaching and conversation of the apostles, and they made good impressions, and their conversation had an influence upon others. Note, Christians should be so good as by their example to influence others.

2. It was very *extensive*, and reached beyond the confines of Thessalonica, even to the believers of all Macedonia, and further in Achaia. The Philippians and others that received the gospel before the Thessalonians, were edified by their example. Note, Some that were last hired into the vineyard, may sometimes outstrip those that come in before them, and become examples to them.

3. It was very *famous*. The word of the Lord, or its wonderful effects upon the Thessalonians, sounded, or was famous and well known in the regions round about that city, and in *every place*; not strictly *every where*, but here and there, up and down in the world: So that from the good success of the gospel among them, many others were encouraged to entertain it, and to be willing, when called, to suffer for it. Their faith was *spread abroad*.

(1.) The *readiness* of their faith was famed abroad. These Thessalonians embraced the gospel as soon as it was preached to them; so that every body took notice what manner of entering in among them the apostles had: That there were no such delays as at Philippi, where it was a great while before much good was done.

(2.) The *effects* of their faith were famous. 1. They quitted their idolatry, they turned from their idols, and abandoned all that false worship they had been educated in. 2. They gave themselves up to God, to the living and true God, and devoted themselves to his service. 3. They set themselves to wait for the Son of God from heaven, *ver. 10.* And this is one of the peculiarities of our holy religion, to wait for Christ's second coming, as those that *believe* he will come, and *hope* he will come to our joy. The believers under the Old Testament waited for the coming of the Messiah, and believers now wait for his second coming; he is yet to come. And there is good reason to *believe* he will come, because God hath *raised him from the dead*, which is a full assurance unto all men that he will come to judgment, *Acts xvii. 31.* And there is good reason to *hope and wait* for his coming, because he hath *delivered us from wrath to come*. He came to *purchase* salvation, and will when he cometh again *bring* salvation with him, full and final deliverance from sin and death and hell; from *that wrath which is yet to come* upon unbelievers; and which when it is once come, will be *yet to come*, because it is *everlasting fire*, prepared for the devil and his angels, *Matt. xxv. ult.*

CHAP. II.

In this chapter the apostle puts the Thessalonians in mind of the manner of his preaching among them, *ver. 1—6.* Then of the manner of his conversation among them, *ver. 7—12.* Afterwards of the success of his ministry, with the effects both on himself and themselves, *ver. 13—16.* And then apologizeth for his absence, *ver. 17—20.*

1. **F**OR your selves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain. 2. But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention. 3. For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile: 4. But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts. 5. For neither at any time used we flat-

tering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God is witness. 6. Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ.

Here we have an account of Paul's manner of preaching, and his comfortable reflexion upon his entrance in among the Thessalonians: And as he had the testimony of his own conscience witnessing to his integrity, so he could appeal to the Thessalonians how faithfully he, and Silas, and Timotheus, his helpers in the work of the Lord, had discharged their office. *You your selves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you.* Note, It is a great comfort to a minister to have his own conscience, and the consciences of others witnessing for him, that he *set out well*, with good designs, and from good principles; and that *his preaching was not in vain*, or, as some read it, *was not vain*. The apostle here comforts himself either in the *success* of his ministry, that it was not fruitless, or *in vain*, (according to our translation) or as others think reflecting upon the *sincerity* of his preaching, that it was not *vain*, and empty or deceitful and treacherous. The subject matter of the apostle's preaching was not *vain* and *idle* speculations, about useless niceties, and foolish questions, but sound and solid truth, such as was most likely to profit his hearers. A good example this is to be imitated by all the ministers of the gospel. Much less was the apostle's preaching *vain* or *deceitful*. He could say to these Thessalonians what he told the Corinthians, 2 Cor. iv. 2. *He had renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully.* He had no sinister or worldly design in his preaching, which he puts them in mind to have been,

(1.) With *courage and resolution*. *We were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God*, *ver. 2.* The apostle was inspired with an holy boldness, nor was he discouraged at the afflictions he met with, or the opposition that was made against him: He had met with ill usage at Philippi, as these Thessalonians well knew; there it was that he and Silas were shamefully entreated, being put in the stocks; yet no sooner were they set at liberty, but they went to Thessalonica and preached the gospel with as much boldness as ever. Note, Suffering in a good cause should rather sharpen than blunt the edge of holy resolution. The gospel of Christ at its first setting out in the world, met with much opposition; and they that preached it, preached it *with contention*, with great agony: Which denoted either the apostles striving in their *preaching*, or their striving *against* the *opposition* they met with. This was Paul's comfort, he was neither daunted in his work, nor driven from it.

(2.) With great *simplicity and godly sincerity*. *Our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile*, *ver. 3.* This, no doubt, was matter of the greatest comfort to the apostle, the consciousness of his own sincerity; and was one reason of his success. It was the sincere and uncorrupted gospel that he preached and exhorted them to believe, and obey. His design was not to set up a faction, to draw men over to a party, but to promote *pure religion, and undefiled before God and the Father*. The gospel he preached was without *deceit*, it was true and faithful; it was not fallacious, nor a cunningly devised fable. Nor was it of *uncleanness*: His gospel was pure and holy, worthy of its holy author, tending to discountenance all manner of impurity. *The word of God is pure*. There should be no corrupt mixtures therewith; and as the *matter* of the apostle's exhortation was thus true and pure, the *manner* of his speaking was *without guile*. He did not *pretend* one thing, and *intend* another. *He believed, and therefore he spake*. He had no sinister and secular aims and views, but was in reality what he seemed to be. The apostle not only asserts his sincerity, but subjoineth the reasons and evidences thereof. The reasons are contained, *ver. 4.* viz.

1. *They were stewards*: Put in trust with the gospel, and it is required of a steward that he be faithful. The gospel which Paul preached, was not his *own*, but the gospel of God. Note, Ministers have a great *favour* shewn them, and *honour* put upon them, and *trust* committed to them. They must not dare to corrupt the word of God: They must diligently make use of what is intrusted with them, so as God hath *allowed* and commanded, knowing they shall be called to an account when they must be no longer stewards.

2. Their design was *to please God* and not men. God is a God of truth, and requireth truth in the inward parts; and if sincerity be wanting, all that we do cannot please God. The gospel of Christ is not accommodated to the vain fancies and lusts of men, to gratify their appetites and passions: But, on the contrary, it was designed for the mortifying their corrupt affections, and delivering them from the power of *fancy*, that they might be brought under the power of *faith*. *If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ*, Gal. i. 10.

3. They acted under the *consideration of God's omniscience*, as in the sight of him who *trieth our hearts*. This is indeed the great motive to sincerity, to consider God not only seeth all that *we do*, but knoweth our *thoughts afar off*, and searcheth the heart. He is well acquainted with all our aims and designs, as well as

our actions: And it is from this God that trieth our hearts, that we must receive our reward.

The evidences of the apostle's sincerity do follow, and they are these.

1. He avoided *flattery*. Neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, ver. 5. He and his fellow-labourers preached Christ and him crucified, and did not aim to gain an interest in mens affections for themselves, by glorying, and fawning, and wheedling them. No, they were far from that; nor did they flatter men in their sins; nor tell them if they would be of his party, they might live as they listed: He did not flatter them with vain hopes, nor indulge them in any evil work or way, promising them life, and so daubing with untempered mortar.

2. He avoided *covetousness*. He did not make the ministry a cloke, or a covering for covetousness, as God was witness, ver. 5. His design was not to enrich himself by preaching the gospel: So far from that, he did not condition with them for bread. He was not like the false apostles, who through covetousness with vain words made merchandize of the people, 2 Pet. ii. 3.

3. He avoided *ambition* and vain glory. Nor of men sought we glory neither of you, nor yet of others, ver. 6. They neither expected peoples purses, nor their caps, neither to be enriched by them, or caressed and adored by them, and called *rabbi*. This apostle exhorts the Galatians, chap. v. 26. not to be desirous of vain glory; his ambition was to obtain that honour which comes from God, John v. 44.

He tells them they might have used greater authority as apostles, and expected greater esteem, and demanded maintenance, which is meant by the phrase of *being burdensome*, because perhaps some would have thought this too great a burden for them to bear.

7. But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children: 8. So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us. 9. For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travel: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God. 10. Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblameably we behaved our selves among you that believe: 11. As you know, how we exhorted and comforted, and charged every one of you (as a father doth his children) 12. That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.

In these words the apostle reminds the Thessalonians of the manner of their conversation among them. And,

(1.) He mentions the *gentleness* of their behaviour. *We were gentle among you*, ver. 7. He shewed great mildness and tenderness, who might have acted with the authority of an apostle of Christ. Such a behaviour greatly recommendeth religion, and is most agreeable to God's gracious dealings with sinners, in and by the gospel. This great apostle, though he abhorred and avoided flattery, was most condescending to all men. He accommodated himself to all men's capacities, and became all things to all men. He shewed the kindness and care of a nurse that cherisheth her children: And this is the way to win people, rather than to rule with rigour. The word of God is indeed powerful; and as it cometh oftentimes with awful authority upon the minds of men, as it always hath enough in it to convince every impartial judgment, yet it cometh with the more pleasing power, when the ministers of the gospel recommend themselves to the affections of the people: And as a nursing mother beareth with frowardness in a child, and condescends to mean offices for its good, and draws out her breast, cherishing it in her bosom; so in like manner should the ministers of Christ behave towards their people. The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, and patient, 2 Tim. ii. 24. This gentleness and goodness the apostle expressed several ways.

1. By the most affectionate desire of their welfare. *Being affectionately desirous of you*, ver. 8. The apostle had a most affectionate love to their persons, and sought them, not theirs; themselves, not their goods; and to gain them, not to be a gainer by them; or to make a merchandize of them: It was their spiritual and eternal welfare and salvation that he was earnestly desirous of.

2. By great readiness to do them good; willingly imparting to them not the gospel of God only, but also their own souls, ver. 8. See here the manner of Paul's preaching. He spared no pains therein. He was willing to run hazards, and venture his soul or life in preaching the gospel: He was willing to spend and be spent in the service of mens souls; and as they who give bread to the hungry from a charitable principle, are said to

impart their souls in what they give, Isa. lviii. 10. so did the apostles in giving forth the bread of life; so dear were these Thessalonians in particular to this apostle, and so great was his love to them.

3. By *bodily labour* to prevent their charge; or that his ministry might not be expensive and burdensome to them. *You remember our labour and travel, for labouring night and day*, &c. ver. 9. He denied himself the liberty he had of taking wages from the churches. To the labour of the ministry, he added that of his calling, as a tent-maker, that he might get his own bread. We are not to suppose the apostle spent the whole night and day in bodily labour, or work, to supply the necessities of his body: For then he would have had no time for the work of the ministry. But he spent part of the night as well as the day in this work, and was willing to forego his rest in the night, that he might have an opportunity to do good to the souls of men in the day time. A good example is here set before the ministers of the gospel, to be industrious for the salvation of mens souls: though it will not follow they are always obliged to preach freely. There is no general rule to be drawn from this instance; either that ministers may at no time work with their hands for supply of their outward necessities, or that they ought always so to do.

4. By the holiness of their conversation, concerning which he appeals not only to them, but to God also, ver. 10. *Ye are witnesses, and God also*. They were observers of their outward conversations in publick before men, and God was witness not only of their behaviour in secret, but of the inward principles from whence they acted. Their behaviour was holy towards God, just towards all men, and unblameable without giving cause of scandal or offence; and they were careful not only not to give offence to them that were without, but to them also that did believe, that they might give no ill example; that their preaching and living might be all of a piece. Herein, saith this apostle, *do I exercise my self to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men*, Acts xxiv. 10.

(2.) He mentions their faithful discharge of the work and office of the ministry, ver. 11, 12. Concerning this also, he could appeal to them as witnesses; Paul and his fellow-labourers were not only good Christians, but faithful ministers. And we should not only be good as to our general calling as Christians, but in our particular callings and relations. Paul exhorted the Thessalonians, not only informing them in their duty, but exciting and quickening them to the performance of it, by proper motives and arguments. And he comforted them also, endeavouring to cheer and support their spirits under difficulties and discouragements they might meet with: And this he did not only publicly but privately also, and from house to house, Acts xx. 20. and charged every one of them by personal addresses; and this some think is intended by the similitude of a father's charging his children. This expression also denoteth the affectionate and compassionate counsels and consolations which this apostle used. He was their spiritual father; and as he cherished them like a nursing mother, so he charged them as a father, with a father's affection rather than a father's authority. As my beloved sons I warn you, 1 Cor. iv. 14.

The manner of this apostle's exhortation ought to be regarded by ministers in particular for their imitation, and the matter of it is greatly to be regarded by them and all others; namely, that they would walk worthy of God, who hath called them to his kingdom and glory, ver. 12. Observe, 1. What is our great gospel-privilege, that God hath called us to his kingdom and glory. The gospel calls us into the kingdom and state of grace here, and unto the kingdom and state of glory hereafter: To heaven and happiness as our end, and to holiness as the way to that end. 2. What is our great gospel-duty, that we walk worthy of God: That the temper of our minds, and tenor of our lives be answerable to this call, and suitable to this privilege. We should accommodate our selves to the intention and design of the gospel, and live suitable to our profession and privileges, our hopes and expectations, as becometh those that are called with such an high and holy calling.

13. For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but (as it is in truth) the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe. 14. For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God, which in Judea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews: 15. Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men: 16. Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles, that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.

Here observe,

(1.) The apostle maketh mention of the *success* of his ministry among these Thessalonians, *ver. 13.* which is expressed,

1. By the *manner of their receiving* the word of God. *When ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but (as it is in truth) the word of God.* Where note, 1. That the word of the gospel is preached by men like ourselves, men of like passions and infirmities with others. *We have this treasure in earthen vessels.* The word of God these Thessalonians received, they heard from the apostles. 2. However, it is in truth the *word of God.* Such was the word the apostles preached by divine inspiration, and such is that which is left upon record, *written* in the scriptures by divine inspiration; and such is that word which in our days is preached, being either contained, or evidently founded on, or deduced from these sacred oracles. 3. They are greatly to blame, who give out their own fancies or injunctions for the word of God. This is the vilest way of imposing upon people, and to deal unfaithfully. 4. They are also to blame, that in hearing of the word, look no further than to the ministry of men, or the *words of men*, who are only, or chiefly pleased with the elegance of the style, or the beauty of the composition, or the voice and manner in which the word is preached, and expect to receive their advantage herein. 5. We should receive the word of God *as* the word of God, with affections suitable to the holiness, wisdom, verity, and goodness thereof. The words of men are frail and perishing like themselves, and sometimes false, and foolish, and fickle: But God's word is holy, wise, just, and faithful; and like its author liveth and abideth for ever. Let us accordingly receive and regard it.

2. By the *wonderful operation* of this word they received. *It effectually worketh in them that believe,* *ver. 13.* They that by faith receive the word, find it profitable: *It doth good to them that walk uprightly,* and by its wonderful effects doth evidence itself to be the word of God. This *converts* their souls, and *enlightens* their minds, and *rejoiceth* their hearts, &c. *Psal. xix.* and such as have this *inward testimony* of the truth of the scriptures, the word of God, by the effectual operations thereof on their hearts, have the *best evidence* of their divine original to themselves, though this is not sufficient to convince others who are strangers thereto.

(2.) He mentions the *good effects* his successful preaching had.

1. Upon *himself* and fellow-labourers: It was a constant cause of thankfulness. *For this cause thank we God without ceasing,* *ver. 13.* The apostle expresses his thankfulness to God *so often* upon this account, that he seemeth to think he never could be sufficiently thankful, that God had counted him faithful, and put him into the ministry, and made his ministrations successful.

2. Upon *themselves.* The word wrought effectually in them, not only to be examples unto others in faith and good works, which he had mentioned before, but also in constancy and patience under sufferings and trials for the sake of the gospel. *Ye became followers of the churches of God, and have suffered like things as they have done,* *ver. 14.* and with like courage and constancy, with like patience and hope. Note, The cross is the Christian's mark: if we are called to suffer, we are called only to be followers of the churches of God; *so persecuted they the prophets that were before you,* *Matt. v. 12.* It is a good effect of the gospel, when we are enabled to suffer for its sake. The apostle mentions the sufferings of the churches of God, which *in Judea were in Christ Jesus.* Those in Judea *first heard* the gospel, and they *first suffered* for it. For the Jews were the most bitter enemies Christianity had, and were especially enraged against *their countrymen* that embraced Christianity. Note, Bitter zeal, and fiery persecution, will set countrymen at variance, and break through all the bonds of nature, as well as contradict all the rules of religion: In every city where the apostles went to preach the gospel, the Jews stirred the inhabitants up against them. They were the ringleaders of persecution in all places, so in particular it was at Thessalonica, *Acts xvii. 5.* *The Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city in an uproar.* Upon this occasion the apostle gives a character of the unbelieving Jews, *ver. 15.* enough to justify their final rejection, and the ruin of their place, and church, and nation, which was now approaching.

1. *They killed the Lord Jesus,* and impudently and presumptuously wished that his blood might be on them, and their children.

2. They killed their *own prophets*: So they had done all along. Their fathers had done so: They had been a persecuting generation.

3. They *hated the apostles,* and did them all the mischief they could. They persecuted them, and drove and chased them from place to place; and no marvel, if they killed the Lord Jesus, that they persecuted his followers.

4. They *pleased not God.* They had quite lost all sense of religion, and due care to do their duty to God. It was a most fatal mistake to think, they did *God service* by killing *God's servants.* Murder and persecution is most hateful to God, and cannot be justified on any pretence; it is so contrary to natural religion,

that no zeal for any true, or only pretended institution of religion, can ever excuse it.

5. They were *contrary to all men.* Their persecuting spirit was a perverse spirit; contrary to the light of nature, and contrary to humanity; contrary to the welfare of all men, and contrary to the sentiments of all men not under the power of bigotry.

6. They had *an implacable enmity to the Gentiles,* and envied them the offers of the gospel, *forbidding the apostles to speak to them that they might be saved.* The means of salvation had long been confined to the Jews. *Salvation is of the Jews,* saith our Saviour. And they were envious against the Gentiles, and angry that they should be admitted to share in the means of salvation. Nothing provoked them more than our Saviour's speaking to them at any time concerning this matter; this enraged the Jews at Jerusalem, when, in his defence, Paul told them, *he was sent unto the Gentiles,* *Acts xxii. 21.* They heard him patiently till he uttered these words, but then could endure no longer; but *lifted up their voices, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth, for it is not fit that he should live.* Thus did the Jews *fill up their sins*; and nothing tends more to any persons or peoples filling up the measure of their sins, than opposing the gospel, and obstructing the progress of it, and hindering the salvation of precious souls. For the sake of these things, *wrath is come upon them to the uttermost,* i. e. wrath was determined against them, and would soon overtake them. It was not many years after this that Jerusalem was destroyed, and the Jewish nation cut off by the Romans. Note, When the measure of any man's iniquity is full, and he hath sinned to the uttermost, then cometh wrath, and that to the uttermost.

17. But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time, in presence, not in heart, endeavoured the more abundantly to see your face with great desire.

18. Wherefore we would have come unto you (even I Paul) once and again; but Satan hindered us. 19. For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? 20. For ye are our glory and joy.

In these words the apostle apologizeth for his absence.

Here observe,

(1.) He tells them they were *involuntarily* forced from them. *We, brethren, were taken from you,* *ver. 17.* Such was the rage of his persecutors. He was unwillingly sent away by night to Berea, *Acts xvi. 20.*

(2.) Though he was absent in *body*, yet he was present in *heart.* He had still a remembrance of them, and great care for them.

(3.) Even his bodily absence was but *for a short time* (the time of an hour) time is short, all our time on earth is short, and uncertain; whether we are present with our friends, or absent from them. This world is not a place where we are always, or long, to be together. It is in heaven holy souls shall meet, and never part more.

(4.) He earnestly *desired, and endeavoured to see them again.* *We endeavoured more abundantly to see your face with great desire,* *ver. 17.* So that the apostle, at least, *intended* his absence should be but for a short time. His desire and endeavour was to return again very soon to Thessalonica. But men of business are not masters of their own time. Paul did his endeavour, and he could do no more, *ver. 18.*

(5.) He tells them, *Satan hindered his return,* *ver. 18. i. e.* either some enemy or enemies, or the *great enemy* of mankind, who stirred up opposition to Paul, either in his return to Thessalonica, when he intended to return thither, or stirred up such *contentions* or *diffensions* in those places whither he went, as made his presence necessary. Note, Satan is a constant enemy to the work of God, and doth all he can to obstruct it.

(6.) He assureth them of his *affection* and high *esteem* for them, though he was not able, as yet, to be present with them, according to his desire. They were his *hope and joy, and crown of rejoicing*; his *glory and joy.* These are expressions of great and endeared affection, and high estimation. And it is happy, when ministers and people have such mutual affection and esteem of each other; and especially if they shall thus rejoice, if they that sow, and they that reap, shall then rejoice together, *in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming.*

The apostle here puts the Thessalonians in mind, that though he could not come to them *as yet*, and though he should *never* be able to come to them, yet our Lord Jesus Christ will come, nothing shall hinder that. And further, when he shall come, all must appear in his presence, or *before him*: Ministers and people must all appear before him, and faithful people will be the glory and joy of faithful ministers in that great and glorious day.

C H A P. III.

In this chapter the apostle giveth further evidence of his love to the Thessalonians, reminding them of his sending Timothy to them, with the mention of his design therein, and his inducements so to do, ver. 1—5. By acquainting them of his great satisfaction at the return of Timothy, with good tidings concerning them, ver. 6—10. And concluding with fervent prayer for them, ver. 11, ad fin.

1. **W**HEREFORE when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone: 2. And sent Timotheus our brother and minister of God, and our fellow-labourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith; 3. That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto. 4. For verily when we were with you, we told you before, that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know. 5. For this cause when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain.

In these words the apostle gives an account of his sending Timothy to the Thessalonians; though he was hindered from going to them himself, yet his love was such, that he could not forbear sending Timothy to them; though he was very useful to him, and could not well spare him, yet he was content, for their good, to be left alone at Athens. Note those ministers do not duly value the establishment and welfare of their people, who cannot deny themselves in many things for that end. Observe,

(1.) The character he giveth of Timothy, ver. 2. *We sent Timotheus our brother*: Elsewhere he calls him *his son*; here he calls him *brother*. Timothy was Paul's junior in age, his inferior in gifts and graces, and of a lower rank in the ministry. For Paul was an *apostle*, and Timothy but an *evangelist*; yet Paul calls him brother. This was an instance of the apostle's humility, and shewed his desire to put honour upon Timothy, and to recommend him to the esteem of the churches. He calls him also a *minister of God*. Note, Ministers of the gospel of Christ, are ministers of God, to promote the kingdom of God among men. He calls him also his *fellow-labourer in the gospel of Christ*. Note, Ministers of the gospel must look upon themselves as labourers in the Lord's vineyard; they have an honourable office, and hard work, yet a good work. *This is a true saying, If any man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work*, 1 Tim. iii. 1. And ministers should look upon one another as fellow-labourers; and should therefore love one another, and strengthen one another's hands, not strive and contend one with another, which will hinder their work; but strive together to carry on the great work they are engaged in, viz. to preach and publish the gospel of Christ, and to persuade people to embrace and entertain it, and live suitably thereto.

(2.) The end and design why Paul sent Timothy, which was to establish them, and comfort them concerning their faith, ver. 2. Paul had converted them to the Christian faith, and now he was desirous they might be confirmed and comforted: That they might be confirmed in the choice they had made of the Christian religion, and be comforted in the profession and practice of it. Note, The more we are comforted, the more we shall be confirmed. Because when we find pleasure in the ways of God, we shall thereby be engaged to continue and persevere therein. The apostle's design was to establish and comfort the Thessalonians concerning their faith. Concerning the object of their faith, viz. the truths of the gospel; and particularly that Jesus Christ was the Saviour of the world, and so wise and good, so powerful and faithful, that they might rely upon him. Concerning the recompense of faith, which was more than sufficient to balance all their losses, and reward all their labours.

(3.) The motives inducing Paul to send Timothy for this end, viz. A godly fear or jealousy, lest they should be moved from the faith of Christ, ver. 3. He was desirous that no man, not one among them, should be moved or shaken in mind; that they should not apostatize or waver in the faith. And yet he apprehended there was danger, and feared the consequence.

1. There was danger by reason of affliction and persecution for the sake of the gospel, ver. 3. These Thessalonians could not but perceive what afflictions the apostles and preachers of the gospel met with, and that might possibly stumble them; and also these who made profession of the gospel were persecuted, and without doubt these Thessalonians themselves were afflicted.

2. By reason of the tempter's subtilty and malice. The apostle was afraid, lest by some means the tempter had tempted them, ver. 3. The devil is a subtle and unwearied tempter, that seeks an opportunity to beguile and destroy us, and taketh all advantages

against us, both in a time of prosperity and adversity; and hath often been successful in his attacks upon persons under afflictions. He hath often prejudiced the minds of men against religion, on account of the sufferings its professors are exposed to. We have reason therefore to be jealous over ourselves and others, lest we be ensnared by him.

The consequence the apostle feared was, lest his labour should be in vain. And thus it would have been if the tempter had tempted them, and prevailed against them to move them from the faith. They had lost what they had wrought, and the apostle would have lost what he laboured for. Note, It is the devil's design to hinder the good fruit and effect of the preaching the gospel. If he cannot hinder ministers from labouring in the word and doctrine, he will, if he be able, hinder them of the success of their labours. Note also, Faithful ministers are much concerned about the success of their labours. No one would willingly labour in vain; and ministers are loth to spend their strength, and pains, and time, for nought.

To prevent this danger, with its bad consequence, the apostle tells them what care he took in sending Timothy. 1. To put them in mind of what he had told them before concerning suffering tribulation, ver. 4. He saith, ver. 3. *We are appointed thereto*, i. e. unto afflictions. So is the will and purpose of God, that through many afflictions we must enter into his kingdom. Their troubles and persecutions did not come by chance, nor merely from the wrath and malice of the enemies of religion; but by the appointment of God. It only came to pass according as God had determined, and they knew he had told them before it would be; so that they should not think it strange, and being forewarned they should be fore-armed. Note, The apostles were so far from flattering people with an expectation of worldly prosperity in religion, that on the contrary they told them plainly, they must count upon trouble in the flesh. And herein they followed the example of their great Master, the author of our faith. Besides, it might prove a confirmation of their faith, when they perceived, that it only happened to them, as was predicted before.

2. To know their faith: That so he might inform the apostles, whether they remained steadfast under all their sufferings, whether their faith failed or not: Because, if their faith did not fail, they would be able to stand their ground against the tempter, and all his temptations: Their faith would be a shield to defend them against all the fiery darts of the wicked, Eph. vi. 16.

6. But now when Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also to see you. 7. Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith: 8. For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord. 9. For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God, 10. Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith?

Here we have Paul's great satisfaction upon the return of Timothy, with good tidings from the Thessalonians. In which we may observe,

(1.) The good report Timothy made concerning them, ver. 6. Without question he was a willing messenger of these good tidings. Concerning their faith, i. e. concerning their steadfastness in the faith, that they were not shaken in mind, nor turned aside from the profession of the gospel. Their love also did continue; their love to the gospel, and the ministers of the gospel. For they had a good and a kind remembrance of the apostles, and that constantly or always. Their names were very dear to them, and the thoughts of them, and what they had received from them were very precious, inasmuch that they desired greatly to see them again, and receive some spiritual gift from them; and there was no love lost, for the apostle was as desirous to see them. It is happy where there is such mutual love between minister and people. This tends to promote religion, and the success of the gospel. The world hateth them, and therefore they should love one another.

(2.) The great comfort and satisfaction the apostle had in this good report concerning them, ver. 7, 8. Therefore, brethren, we were comforted in all our affliction and distress. The apostle thought this good news of them was sufficient to balance all the troubles he met with. It was easy to him to bear affliction, or persecution, or fightings from without, when he found the good success of his ministry, and constancy in the converts he had made to Christianity; and his distress of mind on account of his fears within, lest he had laboured in vain, was now in a good measure over, when he understood their faith, and the perseverance of it. This put new life and spirit into the apostle, and made him vigorous and active in the work of the Lord. Thus he was not only comforted, but greatly rejoiced also. Now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord, ver. 8. It would have been a killing thing to the apostles, if the professors of religion had been unsteady, or proved

proved apostates, whereas nothing was more encouraging than their constancy.

(3.) The *effects* of this were *thankfulness and prayer* to God on their behalf.

1. Observe, How thankful the apostle was, *ver. 9.* He was *full of joy, and full of praise and thanksgiving.* When we are most chearful, we should be most thankful. What we rejoice in, we should give thanks for. This is to rejoice *before our God*, to spiritualize our joy. Paul speaketh, as if he could not tell how to express his thankfulness to God, or his joy, and rejoicing for their sakes: But he was careful God should not lose the glory of that comfort he received in the welfare of his friends. His heart was enlarged with *love to them*, and with *thanksgiving to God*: He was willing to express the one and the other, as well as he could. As to thankfulness to God, this especially is very imperfect in the present state; but when we come to heaven, we shall do this work better than now we can.

2. He prayed *for them night and day*, *ver. 10. i. e.* evening and morning, or very frequently; in the midst of the business of the day, or slumber of the night, lifting up his heart to God in prayer. Thus we should *pray always*. And Paul's prayer was fervent prayer. He *prayed exceedingly*, and was earnest in his supplication. Note, When we are most thankful, we should also *give ourselves to prayer*; and those we *give thanks for*, yet have need to be *prayed for*. Those we most rejoice in, and that are our greatest comforts, must be our constant care, while in this world of temptation and imperfection. *There was something still lacking in their faith*, that Paul desired might be perfected, and to see their face in order thereunto.

Note, 1. The best of men have something wanting in their faith; if not as to the *matter* of it, there being some mysteries or doctrines not sufficiently known or believed by them, yet as to the *clearness and certainty* of their faith, there being some remaining darkneses and doubtings, at least as to the *effects and operations* of it, these being not so conspicuous and perfect as they should be. And,

2. The ministry of the word and ordinances is helpful, and to be desired and used for the perfecting that which is *lacking in our faith*.

11. Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ direct our way unto you. 12. And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one towards another, and towards all men, even as we do towards you: 13. To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, with all his saints.

In these words we have the earnest prayer of the apostle. He desired to be *instrumental* in the further benefit of the Thessalonians; and the only way to do so whilst at a distance was by prayer for them, together with his writing or sending to them. He desired that their faith might be perfected, which he could not be the proper *cause* or *author* of; for he pretended not to *dominion* over their faith, nor to have the *donation* of it, and he therefore concludeth with prayer for them. In which observe,

(1.) *Whom* he prayeth to, namely, *God and Christ*. Prayer is a part of religious worship, and *all* religious worship is due unto God *only*. Prayer is here made to God, even *the Father and our Father*; and also to *Christ*, even *our Lord Jesus Christ*. Therefore Jesus Christ our Lord is God, even as God our Father is God. Prayer is to be offered to *God as our Father*. So *Christ taught* his disciples to pray; and so the *Spirit of adoption prompts* them to pray, to cry *Abba, Father*. Prayer is not only to be offered in the *name of Christ*, but offered *up to Christ himself* as our Lord, and our Saviour.

(2.) *What* he prayeth for, with respect to himself and his fellow-labourers, then on behalf of the Thessalonians.

1. He prays that *they* might have a prosperous journey to them by the will of God: That *their way might be directed to them*, *ver. 11.* The taking of a journey to this or that place, one would think, is a thing depending so much upon a man's own will, and lies so much in his own power, that Paul needed not by prayer to go to God about it. But the apostle knew, that *in God we live and move, and have our being*; that we depend upon God in all our motions and actions, as well as for the continuance of life and being; that divine providence orders all our affairs, and that it is owing thereto if we prosper therein: That God our Father doth direct and order his children whither they shall go, and what they shall do: That our Lord Jesus Christ in a particular manner directs the motions of his faithful ministers, *those stars which he holdeth in his right hand*. Let us acknowledge God in all our ways, and he will direct our paths.

2. He prayeth for the prosperity of the Thessalonians; whether he should have an opportunity of coming to them or not, yet he earnestly prayeth for the prosperity of their souls: and there are two things he desired for them, which we should desire for our selves and our friends.

No. cxii.

1. That they might *increase and abound in love*, *ver. 12.* in love to one another, and in love to all men. Note, That mutual love is required of all Christians; and not only that they love *one another*, but that they also have a charitable disposition of mind, and due concern for the welfare of *all men*. Love is of God; and is the fulfilling of the gospel, as well as of the law. Timothy brought good tidings of their faith, yet something was lacking therein: and of their charity and love, and yet the apostle prayeth that that might *increase and abound*. Note, We have reason to desire to grow in every grace; and have need of the Spirit's influence in order to growth in grace; and the way to obtain that is prayer. We are beholden to God not only for the *stock* put into our hands at first, but for the *improvement* of it also. And to our prayer we must add endeavour. To excite this in the Thessalonians, the apostle again mentions his love, his abounding love *towards them*. The more we are beloved, the more loving we should be.

2. That they might be established unblameable in holiness, *ver. 13.* This spiritual benefit is mentioned as an effect of increasing and abounding love. To the end *that he*, i. e. the Lord, *may establish your hearts*. Note, The more we grow and abound in grace, and particularly in the grace of love, the more we are established and confirmed in it. Note also, That holiness is required of all those that would go to heaven, and that therein we must be *unblameable*, i. e. We must carry our selves in every thing so, as that we may not in the least contradict the profession we make of holiness. Our desire should be to have our hearts established in holiness *before God*, and be preserved safe to the *coming of the Lord Jesus Christ*; and that we may be unblameable before God, *even the Father* now, and be presented blameless before the throne of his glory, when the Lord Jesus will come *with all his saints*. Note, 1. The Lord Jesus will certainly come, and come in his glory. 2. When he cometh, his saints will come with him: *They shall appear with him in glory*. 3. Then the excellency as well as the necessity of holiness will appear; because without this no hearts shall be established at that day, nor shall any one be unblameable, or avoid everlasting condemnation.

C H A P. IV.

In this chapter the apostle gives earnest exhortations to abound in holiness, with a caution against uncleanness, enforced with several arguments, *ver. 1—8.* He then mentions the great duties of brotherly love, and quietness with industry in our callings, *ver. 9—12.* and concludeth with comforting them that mourned for their relations and friends that died in the Lord, *ver. 13—18.*

1. **F**urthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how you ought to walk, and to please God, so ye would abound more and more. 2. For ye know what commandments we gave you, by thy Lord Jesus. 3. For this is the will of God, *even* your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: 4. That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; 5. Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God: 6. That no man go beyond, and defraud his brother in *any* matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you, and testified. 7. For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness. 8. He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit.

Here we have,

(1.) An exhortation to abound in holiness, *to abound more and more* in that which is good, *ver. 1, 2.* In which we may observe,

1. The *manner* in which the exhortation is given, *viz.* very affectionately. The apostle entreateth them as brethren; he calls them so, and loved them as such. Because his love to them was very great, he exhorts them very earnestly. *We beseech, and exhort you.* The apostle was unwilling to take any denial, and therefore repeateth his exhortation again and again.

2. The *matter* of his exhortation; That they would *abound more and more* in holy walking, or excel in those things that are good, in good works. Their faith was justly famed abroad, and they were already examples to other churches: However the apostle would have them yet further to excel others, and to make further progress in holiness. Note, 1. Those who do most excel others, yet fall short of perfection. The very best of us should *forget those things which are behind, and reach forth unto those things that are before*. 2. It is not enough that we *abide* in the faith of the gospel, but we must *abound* in the *work* of faith.

We must not only persevere to the end, but we should grow better, and walk more evenly and closely with God.

3. The arguments with which the apostle enforceth his exhortation, viz. 1. They had been informed of their duty. They knew their Master's will, and could not plead their ignorance as an excuse. Now as faith, so knowledge is dead without practice. They had received of them who had converted them to Christianity, or been taught of them how they ought to walk: Where observe, the design of the gospel is not only to teach men what they should believe, but also how they ought to live: Not so much to fill mens minds with notions, as to regulate their temper and behaviour. The apostle taught them how to walk, not how to talk. To talk well without living well, will never bring us to heaven: For the character of those that are in Christ Jesus is this; *They walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.* 2. Another argument is, that the apostle taught and exhorted them in the name, or by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was Christ's minister and ambassador, declaring to them what was the will and command of the Lord Jesus. 3. Another argument is this. Herein they would please God. Holy walking is most pleasing to the holy God, who is glorious in holiness. This ought to be the aim and ambition of every Christian, to please God, and to be accepted of him. We should not be men-pleasers, nor flesh pleasers, but should walk so as to please God. 4. The rule according to which they ought to walk and act, i. e. The commandments they had given them by the Lord Jesus Christ; which were the commandments of the Lord Jesus Christ himself; because given by authority and direction from him, and such as were agreeable to his will. The apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ were only commissioned by him to teach men to observe all things whatsoever he had commanded them, Matt. xxviii. 20. Though they had great authority from Christ, yet that was to teach men what Christ had commanded, not to give forth commandments of their own. They did not act as lords over God's heritage, 1 Pet. v. 3. nor should any do so, that pretend to be their successors. The apostle could appeal to the Thessalonians, who knew what commandments he gave them, that they were no other than what he had received from the Lord Jesus.

(2.) A caution against uncleanness, that being a sin directly contrary to sanctification, or that holy walking he so earnestly exhorts them to. This caution is expressed, and also enforced by many arguments.

1. It is expressed in these words: *That ye should abstain from fornication*, ver. 3. By which words we are to understand all uncleanness whatsoever, either in a married or unmarried state: To be sure adultery is here included, though fornication is particularly mentioned. And other sorts of uncleanness are forbidden, of which it is a shame even to speak, though they are done by too many in secret. All that is contrary to chastity in heart, speech, and behaviour, is contrary to the command of God in the decalogue, and contrary to that holiness the gospel requireth.

2. There are several arguments to enforce this caution: As, 1. This branch of sanctification in particular, is the will of God, ver. 3. Not only is it the will of God in general that we should be holy, because he that calleth us is holy; and because we are chosen unto salvation through the sanctification of the Spirit: And not only doth God require holiness in the heart, but also purity in our bodies, and that we should cleanse our selves from all filthiness both of flesh and Spirit, 2 Cor. vii. 1. Wherever the body is as it ought to be, devoted to God, and dedicated and set apart for him, it should be kept clean and pure for his service. And as chastity is one branch of our sanctification, so this is one thing God commands in his law, and what his grace effects in all true believers. 2. This will be greatly for our honour. So much is plainly implied, ver. 4. Whereas the contrary will be a great dishonour. And his reproach shall not be wiped away, Prov. vi. 33. The body is here called the vessel of the soul that dwells therein, so 1 Sam. xxi. 5. and that must be kept pure from defiling lusts. Every one should be careful in this matter as he valueth his own honour, and will not be contemptible on this account: That his interior appetites and passions gain not the ascendant, and tyrannize over his reason and conscience, and enslave the superior faculties of his soul. What can be more dishonourable than for a rational soul to be enslaved by bodily affections, and brutal appetites? 3. To indulge the lusts of concupiscence, is to live and act like heathens; even as the Gentiles that know not God, ver. 5. The Gentiles, and especially the Grecians, were commonly guilty of some sins of uncleanness, which were not so evidently forbidden by the light of nature. But they did not know God nor his mind and will, so well as Christians do and should know this his will, viz. our sanctification in this branch of it. It is not so much to be wondered at therefore if the Gentiles indulge their fleshly appetites and lusts; but Christians should not walk as unconverted Gentiles, in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, &c. 1 Pet. iv. 3. because they that are in Christ, have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts. 4. The sin of uncleanness, especially adultery, is a great piece of injustice that God will be the avenger of; so we may understand those words, *That no man go beyond or defraud his brother*, ver. 6. in any matter εν τῷ ἀδελφύματι, this matter of which the apostle is speaking in the preceding and

following verses, viz. the sin of uncleanness. Some understand these words as a further warning and caution against injustice and oppression, all fraud and deceit in our dealing with men, which is certainly a crime, and which is contrary to the gospel. And Christians should not impose upon the ignorance and necessity of those they deal with, and so go beyond them, nor should they by equivocations or lying arts defraud them: and although this may be practised by some, and lie long undiscovered, and so go unpunished among men; yet the righteous God will render a recompence. But the meaning may rather be to show the injustice and wrong that in many cases is done by the sin of uncleanness. Not only is fornication and other acts of uncleanness sins against his own body that committeth them, 1 Cor. vi. 18. not only are they very injurious to the sinner himself both in soul and body; but sometimes very injurious and no less than defrauding, and acts of injustice to others; particularly to them that are joined together in the marriage-covenant, and to their posterity. And as this sin is of such an heinous nature, so it follows that God will be the avenger of it. Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge, Heb. xiii. 4. This the apostle had forewarned and testified by his gospel; which as it contained exceeding great and precious promises, so also it revealed from heaven the wrath of God against all ungodliness and unrighteousness among men, Rom. i. 18. 5. The sin of uncleanness is contrary to the nature and design of our Christian calling. For God hath called us not unto uncleanness, but unto holiness, ver. 7. The law of God forbids all impurity, and the gospel requires the greatest purity, that calls us from uncleanness unto holiness. 6. The contempt therefore of God's law and gospel is the contempt of God himself. He that despiseth, despiseth God, not man, only. Some might possibly make light of the precepts of purity and holiness, because they heard them from men like themselves; but the apostle lets them know that they were God's commands, and to violate them was no less than to despise God. He adds that God hath given Christians his Spirit; intimating that all sorts of uncleanness do in an especial manner grieve the holy Spirit, and will provoke him to withdraw from us; and also the holy Spirit is given unto us to arm us against these sins, and to help us to mortify these deeds of the body that we may live, Rom. viii. 13.

9. But as touching brotherly love, ye need not that I write unto you: for ye your selves are taught of God to love one another. 10. And indeed ye do it towards all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more: 11. And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands (as we commanded you) 12. That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing.

In those words the apostle mentions the great duties,

(1.) Of brotherly love. This he exhorts them to increase in yet more and more. The exhortation is introduced, not with a compliment, but with a commendation; because they were remarkable in the exercise of it; which made it less needful he should write to them about it; ver. 9. Thus by his good opinion of them he insinuated himself into their affections, and so maketh way for his exhortation to them. Note, We should take notice of that in others which is good to their praise, that by so doing we may lay engagements upon them to abound therein more and more. Observe,

1. What it is that the apostle commendeth in them. It was not so much their own virtue as God's grace, yet he taketh notice of the evidence they shewed of the grace of God in them. 1. It was God's grace he taketh special notice of; that God had taught them this good lesson: *Ye your selves are taught of God to love one another*, ver. 9. Whoever do that which is good, are taught of God to do it, and God must have the glory. All that are savingly taught of God, are taught this lesson, to love one another. This is the livery of Christ's family. Note also, That the teaching of the Spirit exceeds the teachings of men; and as no man should teach contrary to what God teacheth, so none can teach so effectually as he teacheth; and mens teaching is vain and useless unless God teach also. 2. The Thessalonians gave good evidence of their being taught of God, by their love to the brethren in all Macedonia, ver. 10. They not only loved them of their own city and society; or such as were near them, and just of their own sentiments; but their love was extensive: And a true Christian's is so to all the saints, though distant from him in place, and differing from him in some opinions or practices of less moment.

2. The exhortation itself is to increase more and more in this great grace and duty of brotherly love, ver. 10. Though these Thessalonians had in some sense no need of an exhortation to brotherly love, as if it were wholly wanting; yet they must be exhorted to pray for more, and labour for more. There are none on this side heaven who love in perfection. Those that are eminent in this or any other grace, have need of increase therein as well as perseverance unto the end.

(2.) Of quietness and industry in their callings. Observe,
1. The apostle *exhorteth* to these duties; that they should *study to be quiet*, ver. 11. It is a most desirable thing to have a calm and quiet temper, and to be of a peaceable and quiet behaviour. This tends much to our own and others happiness; and Christians should *study* how to be quiet. We should be *ambitious and industrious* how to be calm and quiet in *our minds*, and in patience to possess our own souls, and to be quiet *towards others*; or of a meek and mild, a gentle and peaceable disposition, not given to strife, or contention, or division. Satan is very busy to disquiet us; and we have that in our own hearts that disposeth us to be unquiet. Therefore let us *study to be quiet*. It follows, *do your own business*; and when we go beyond that, we expose ourselves to a great deal of inquietude. Those who are *busy-bodies*, meddling in other mens matters, generally have but little quiet in their own minds; and cause great disturbances among their neighbours; at least they seldom mind the other exhortation to be diligent in their own calling, *to work with their own hands*. And yet this was what the apostle commanded them, and what is required of us also. Christianity doth not discharge us of the work and duty of our particular callings, but teacheth us to be diligent therein.

2. The exhortation is enforced with a double argument. Namely, 1. So we shall live *creditably*. Thus we shall walk *honestly*, or decently and creditably towards them that are without, ver. 12. This will be to act as becomes the gospel, and will gain a good report from them that are strangers, yea enemies to it. Note, It is a great ornament to a religion, when the professors of it are of meek and quiet spirits, diligent to do their own business, and not busy-bodies in other mens matters. 2. We shall live *comfortably*, and *have lack of nothing*, ver. 12. People oftentimes by their slothfulness bring themselves into narrow circumstances, and reduce themselves to great straits, and are liable to many wants; when such as are diligent in their own business live comfortably, and have lack of nothing. They are not *burdensome* to their friends, nor *scandalous* to strangers: They earn their own bread, and have the greatest pleasure in so doing.

13. But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. 14. For if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him. 15. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep. 16. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17. Then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. 18. Wherefore, comfort one another with these words.

In these words the apostle comforts the Thessalonians that mourned for the death of their relations and friends that died in the Lord. His design is to dissuade them from excessive grief, or inordinate sorrow, on that account. All grief for the death of friends is far from being unlawful, we may weep at least for *ourselves* if we do not weep for *them*; weep for our own loss, though that may be their gain. Yet we must not be *immoderate* or *excessive* in our sorrows; because,

1. This looketh as if *we had no hope*, ver. 13. It is to act too much like the Gentiles, who had no hope of a better life after this; whereas we Christians who have a most *sure* hope, the hope of *eternal life* after this, which *God who cannot lye hath promised us*, should moderate all our joys and our sorrows on account of any worldly thing. This hope is more than enough to balance all our griefs, upon the account of any of the crosses of the present time.

2. This is an effect of *ignorance* concerning those that are dead, ver. 13. There are some things which we cannot but be ignorant of concerning them that are asleep; for the land they are removed to is a *land of darkness*, which we know but little of, and have no correspondence with. To go among the dead, is to go among we know not whom, and to live we know not how: Death is an unknown thing, and the state of the dead, or the state after death, we are much in the dark about; yet there are some things concerning them especially that die in the Lord, that we need not, and ought not, to be ignorant of: and if those things are rightly understood, and duly considered, they will be sufficient to allay our sorrow concerning them, viz.

1. *They sleep in Jesus*. They are *asleep*, ver. 13. They are *fallen asleep in Christ*, 1 Cor. xv. 18. Death doth not annihilate them. It is but a sleep to them. It is their rest, and undisturbed

rest. They are retired out of this troublesome world, to rest from all their labours and sorrows, and they sleep *in Jesus*, ver. 14. Being still in union with him, they sleep in his arms, and are under his special care and protection. Their souls are in his presence, and their dust under his care and power, so that they are not *lost*, nor are they *losers*, but great *gainers* by death, and their removal out of this world is into a better.

2. They shall be *raised up* from the dead, and awaked out of their sleep, for *God will bring them with him*, ver. 14. They then are with God, and are better where they *are*, than when they *were* here; and when God cometh he will bring them with him. The doctrine of the resurrection, and the second coming of Christ, is a great antidote against the fear of death, and inordinate sorrow for the death of our Christian friends; and this doctrine we have a full assurance of, because we *believe that Jesus died and rose again*, ver. 14. It is taken for granted, that as Christians they knew and believed this. The death and resurrection of Christ are fundamental articles of the Christian religion, and give us hope of a joyful resurrection: For *Christ being risen from the dead, is become the first-fruits of them that sleep*; and therefore *they who are fallen asleep in him are not perished or lost*, 1 Cor. xv. 18, 20. His resurrection is a full confirmation of all that is said in the gospel, or by the word of the Lord, which hath brought life and immortality to light.

3. Their state and condition shall be glorious and happy at the second coming of Christ. This the apostle informeth the Thessalonians of *by the word of the Lord*, ver. 15. i. e. by divine revelation from the Lord Jesus: For though the resurrection of the dead, and future state of blessedness, was part of the creed of the Old Testament saints, yet it is much more clearly revealed in and by the gospel. By this word of the Lord we know, 1. That the Lord Jesus will come down from heaven in all the pomp and power of the upper world, ver. 16. *The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout*. He ascended up into heaven after his resurrection, and is passed through these *material* heavens into the *third* heaven, that must retain him till the restitution of all things: and then he will come again, and appear in his glory. He will descend from heaven into this *our air*, ver. 17. The appearance will be with pomp and power, *with a shout*; the shout of a *king*, and the power and authority of a *mighty king and conqueror*, with *the voice of the archangel*; an innumerable company of angels will attend him; perhaps *one*, as *general of those hosts of the Lord*, shall give notice of his approach, and the glorious appearance of this great redeemer and judge shall be proclaimed and ushered in by the *trump of God*. *For his trumpet shall sound*, and that will wake them that sleep in the dust of the earth, and shall summon all the world to appear. For,

2. The dead shall be raised. *The dead in Christ shall rise first*, ver. 16. i. e. before those that are *found alive at Christ's coming shall be changed*; and so it appeareth that those who shall then be *found alive shall not prevent them that are asleep*, ver. 15. The first care of the redeemer in that day will be about his dead saints; he will raise them before the great change passeth on them that shall be found alive; so that those that did not sleep in death will have no greater privilege nor joy at that day, than those who fell asleep in Jesus.

3. They that shall be *found alive will then be changed*. They shall be *caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air*, ver. 17. At or immediately before this rapture into the clouds, those that are alive will undergo a mighty change, that will be equivalent to dying. This change is so mysterious, we cannot comprehend it, we know little or nothing of it, 1 Cor. xv. 51. Only in the general, *this mortal must put on immortality*; and these bodies shall be made fit to inherit the kingdom of God, which *flesh and blood* in its present state is not capable of. This change will be in a *moment*, in the *twinking of an eye*, 1 Cor. xv. 52. in the very instant, or not long after the raising up them that sleep in Jesus. And these who are raised, and thus changed, shall meet *together* in the clouds, and there meet *with their Lord* to congratulate his coming, and receive the crown of glory he will then bestow upon them, and to be *assessors* with him in judgment, approving and applauding that sentence, he will then pass upon the prince of the power of the air, and all the wicked who shall be doomed to destruction with the devil and his angels.

4. Here is the *bliss of the saints at that day*, they shall be *ever with the Lord*, ver. 17. It will be some part of their felicity, that all the saints shall *meet* together, and *remain* together for ever: But the principal happiness of heaven is this, *to be with the Lord*, to *see* him, *live* with him, and *enjoy* him for ever. This should comfort the saints upon the death of their pious friends: That although death hath made a separation, yet their *souls and bodies* will meet again; *we and they* shall meet together again: We and they with *all the saints* shall meet *our Lord*, and be with him for *ever*, no more to be separated either from him or from one another for ever. And the apostle would have us *comfort one another with these words*, ver. 18. We should endeavour to support one another in times of sorrow; not deaden one another's spirits, nor weaken one another's hands, but should comfort one another; and that may be done by serious consideration and discourse

course on the many good lessons to be learned from the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, and the second coming of Christ, and the glory of the saints in that day.

C H A P. V.

The apostle having spoken in the end of the foregoing chapter concerning the resurrection, and the second coming of Christ; he proceeds to speak concerning the useflessness of enquiring after the particular time of Christ's coming, which would be sudden and terrible to the wicked, but comfortable to the saints, ver. 1—5. He then exhorts them to the duties of watchfulness, sobriety, and exercise of faith, love, and hope, as being suitable to their state, ver. 6—10. In the next words he exhorts them to several duties they owed to others, or to one another, ver. 11—15. And afterwards to several other Christian duties of great importance, ver. 16—22. And then concludes this epistle, ver. 23—28.

1. **B**UT of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. 2. For your selves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. 3. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. 4. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. 5. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.

In these words observe,

(1.) The apostle tells the Thessalonians, it was needless or useless to enquire about the particular time of Christ's coming. *Of the times and seasons, ye need not that I write unto you, ver. 1.* The thing is certain that Christ will come, and there is a certain time appointed for his coming; but there was no need that the apostle should write about that, and therefore he had no revelation given him; nor should they or we enquire into this secret, which the Father hath reserved in his own power. *Of that day and hour knoweth no man.* Christ himself did not reveal this while upon earth; it was not in his commission as the great prophet of the church: nor did he reveal this to his apostles; there was no need of this; there are times and seasons for us to *do our work* in, that it is our duty and interest to know and observe; but the time and season when we must *give up our account*, we know not, nor is it needful we should know that. Note, There are many things which our vain curiosity desireth to know, which there is no necessity at all of our knowing; nor would our knowledge of them do us good.

(2.) He tells them the coming of Christ would be sudden, and a great surprize to most men, *ver. 2.* And this is *what they knew perfectly*, or might know, because our Lord himself had so said. *In such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh, Matt. xxiv. 44.* So *Mark xiii. 35, 36.* Watch ye therefore, for ye know not when the master of the house cometh; lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And no doubt the apostle had told them, as of the coming of Christ, so also of his coming suddenly, which is the meaning of his coming *as a thief in the night, Rev. xvi. 15.* As the thief usually cometh in the dead time of the night, when he is least expected; such a surprize will the day of the Lord be. So sudden and surprizing his appearance. And the knowledge of this will be more useful than to know the *exact time*, because this should awaken us to stand upon our watch, that we may be ready whenever he cometh.

(3.) He tells them how terrible Christ's coming would be to the ungodly, *ver. 3.* It will be to *their destruction* in that day of the Lord. The righteous God will bring ruin upon his, and his peoples enemies; and this their destruction as it will be total and final, so, 1. It will be *sudden*. It will overtake them and fall upon them in the midst of their carnal security and jollity; when they say in their hearts *peace and safety*, when they dream of felicity, and please themselves with vain amusements of their fancies or their senses, and think not of it, *as travail cometh upon a woman with child*, at the set time indeed, but was not perhaps just then expected, nor greatly feared. 2. It will be *unavoidable* destruction too. *They shall not escape*; they shall in *no wise* escape: There will be no means possible for them to avoid the terror or the punishment of that day. There will be *no place where the workers of iniquity shall be able to hide themselves*; no shelter from the storm, nor shadow from the burning heat that shall consume the wicked.

(4.) He tells them how comfortable this day will be to the righteous, *ver. 4, 5.* Where observe,

1. Their *character and privilege*. They are *not in darkness*; they are the children of the light, &c. This was the happy condition of the Thessalonians, and of all true Christians. They were not in a state of sin and ignorance as the heathen world.

They were *sometimes darkness, but were made light in the Lord*. They were favoured with the divine revelation of things that are unseen and eternal, particularly concerning the *coming of Christ*, and the consequences thereof. They were the *children of the day*, for the *day-star* had risen upon them; yea, the *sun of righteousness* had shined on them with healing under his wings. They were no longer under the *darkness of heathenism*, nor under the *shadows of the law*, but under the gospel, which brings *life and immortality to light*.

2. Their great *advantage* on this account: That *that day should not overtake them as a thief, ver. 4.* It was at least their own fault if they were surprized by that day. They had fair warning, and sufficient helps to provide against that day, and might hope to stand with comfort and confidence before the Son of man. This would be a time of *refreshing to them from the presence of the Lord*, who to them that look for him will appear without sin unto their salvation, and will come to them as a friend in the day, not as a thief in the night.

6. Therefore let us not sleep as *do others*; but let us watch and be sober. 7. For they that sleep, sleep in the night; and they that be drunken, are drunken in the night. 8. But let us who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breast-plate of faith and love, and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. 9. For God hath not appointed us to wrath; but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, 10. Who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.

From what had been said, the apostle grounds seasonable exhortations to several needful duties.

(1.) To watchfulness and sobriety, *ver. 6.* These duties are distinct, yet they mutually besfriend one another. For whilst we are compassed about with so many temptations to intemperance and excess, we shall not keep sober, unless we be upon our guard; and unless we keep sober, we shall not long watch.

1. Then *let us not sleep as do others*, but let us *watch*, i. e. we must not be secure and careless, nor indulge spiritual sloth and idleness. We must not be off our watch, but continually upon our guard against sin and temptation to it. The generality of men are too careless of their duty, and regardless of their spiritual enemies. They say *peace and safety*, when they are in the greatest danger; and doze away their precious moments, on which eternity depends, indulging idle dreams; and have no more thoughts and cares about another world, than men that are asleep have about this. Either they do not consider the things of another world at all, because they are asleep; or they do not consider them aright, because they dream. But let us watch, and act like men that are awake, and that stand upon their guard.

2. Let us also *be sober*, or temperate, and moderate. Let us keep our natural desires and appetites after the things of this world within due bounds. Sobriety is usually opposed to excess in meats and drinks; and here particularly it is opposed to drunkenness. But it also extends to all other temporal things. Thus our Saviour warned his disciples, to *take heed lest their hearts were overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon them unawares, Luke xxi. 34.* Our moderation then as to all temporal things should be known to all men, because the Lord is at hand.

Besides this, watchfulness and sobriety is most suitable to the Christians character and privilege, as being *children of the day*; because *they that sleep, sleep in the night, and they that be drunken are drunken in the night, ver. 7.* It is a most reproachful thing for men to sleep away the day-time, which is for *work* and not for *sleep*: To be drunken *in the day*, when so many eyes are upon them to behold their shame. It was not so strange if those who had not the benefit of divine revelation suffered themselves to be lulled asleep by the devil in carnal security; and if they laid the reins upon the neck of their appetites, and indulged themselves in all manner of riot and excess: for it was *night-time* with them; they were not sensible of their *danger*, therefore they *slept*; they were not sensible of their *duty*, therefore they were *drunk*. But it ill becomes Christians to do thus. What! shall Christians, who have the light of the blessed gospel shining in their faces, be careless about their souls, and mindless of another world? They that have so many eyes upon them, should carry themselves decently.

(2.) To be well armed as well as watchful: To put on the whole armour of God. And this is necessary in order to such sobriety as becomes us, and will be a preparation for the day of the Lord; because our spiritual enemies are many, and mighty, and malicious; they draw many to their interest, and keep them in it, by making them careless, and secure and presumptuous, by making them *drunk*; drunk with *pride*, drunk with *passion*, drunk and giddy with *self-conceit*; drunk with the *gratifications of sense*. So that we have need to arm ourselves against their attempts, by putting on the spiritual *breast-plate* to keep the heart, and the spiritual *helmet* to secure the head; and this spiritual armour consists

of the three great graces of the Christians, *faith, love, and hope*, ver. 8.

1. We must live by *faith*, and that will keep us watchful and sober. If we believe that the eye of God (who is a spirit) is always upon us; that we have spiritual enemies to grapple with, that there is a world of spirits to prepare for, we shall see reason to watch and be sober. Faith will be our best defence against the assaults of our enemies.

2. We must get an heart inflamed with *love*; and this also will be our defence. True and fervent love to God, and the things of God, will keep us watchful and sober, and hinder our apostasy in times of trouble and temptation.

3. We must make salvation *our hope*, and should have a lively hope of it. This *good hope through grace* of eternal life, will be as an *helmet* to defend the head, and hinder our being intoxicated with the pleasures of sin which are but for a season. If we have hope of salvation, let us take heed of doing any thing that shall shake our hopes, or render ourselves unworthy of, or unfit for, the great salvation we hope for. Having mentioned salvation and the hope of it, the apostle shews what grounds and reasons the Christians have to hope for this salvation; as to which observe, he saith nothing of *their meriting it*. No, the doctrine of our merits is altogether unscriptural, and antiscritural: there is no foundation of any good hope upon that account. But our hopes are to be grounded, 1. Upon God's appointment: because *God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation*, ver. 9. if we would trace our salvation to the first cause, that is God's appointment. Those that live and die in darkness and ignorance, that sleep and are drunken as in the night, it is but too plain they are *appointed to wrath*; but as for those who are of the day, if they watch and be sober, it is evident they are *appointed to obtain salvation*. And the sureness and firmness of the divine appointment, is the great support and encouragement of our hope. Were we to obtain salvation by our own merit or power, we could have but little or no hope of it: but seeing we are to obtain it by virtue of God's appointment, which we are sure cannot be shaken, *for his purpose, according to election, shall stand*; on that we build unshaken hope; especially when we consider, 2. Christ's merit and grace, and that salvation is *by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us*. Our salvation therefore is owing to, and our hopes of it grounded on, Christ's atonement as well as God's appointment: And as we should think on God's gracious design and purpose, so also on Christ's death and sufferings for this end, *that whether we wake or sleep, i. e. whether we live or die, for death is but a sleep to believers, (as the apostle had before intimated) we should live together with Christ, i. e. live in union with him, and in glory with him for ever*. And as it is the salvation that Christians hope for, *to be for ever with the Lord*; so one foundation of their hope is their union with him. And if they are *united with Christ, and live in him, and live to him here*, the sleep of death will be no prejudice to the spiritual life, much less to the life of glory hereafter. On the contrary Christ hath died for us, that living and dying we might be *his*; that we might live to *him* whilst we are here, and live *with him* when we go hence.

11. Wherefore comfort your selves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do. 12. And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; 13. And to esteem them very highly in love for their works sake. And be at peace among your selves. 14. Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men. 15. See that none render evil for evil unto any man: but ever follow that which is good, both among your selves, and to all men.

In these words the apostle exhorts the Thessalonians to several duties.

(1.) Towards those that were nearly related one to another. Such should comfort themselves, or exhort one another, and edify one another, ver. 11.

1. They must *comfort* or *exhort* themselves and one another; for the original word may be rendered both these ways. And we may observe, as those are most able, and likely to comfort others who can comfort themselves; so the way to have comfort ourselves, or to administer comfort to others, is by compliance with the exhortation of the word. Note, We should not only be careful about our *own* comfort and welfare, but to promote the comfort and welfare of *others* also. He was a Cain, that said, *am I my brother's keeper?* We must bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

2. They must *edify* one another, by *following after those things whereby one may edify another*, Rom. xiv. 19. As Christians are *lively stones built up together a spiritual house*, they should endeavour to promote the good of the *whole church*, by promoting the work of grace in one another. And it is the duty of every one of us, to study that which is for the edification of those with whom we converse: *to please all men for their real profit*. We should com-

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municate our knowledge and experiences one to another. We should join in prayer and praise one with another. We should set a good example one before another. And it is the duty of those especially that live in the same vicinity and family, thus to comfort, and edify one another; and this is the best neighbourhood, the best means to answer the end of society. Such as are nearly related together, and have affection for one another, as they have the greatest *opportunity*, so they are under the greatest *obligation* to do this kindness one to another. This the Thessalonians did (*which also ye do*) and this is what they are exhorted to continue and increase in doing. Note, Those that do that which is good, have need of further exhortations to excite them to do good, to do more good, as well as continue in doing what they do.

(2.) He sheweth them their duty towards their ministers, ver. 12, 13. Though the apostle himself was driven from them, yet they had others who laboured among them, and to whom they owed these duties. The apostle here exhorts them to observe,

1. How the ministers of the gospel are described by *the work* of their office; and they should rather mind the *work* and duty they are called *to*, than affect venerable and honourable *names* they may be called *by*. Their work is very weighty, and very honourable and useful. 1. Ministers must *labour* among their people, labour with diligence, and unto weariness, so the word in the original imports: *They must labour in the word and doctrine*, 1 Tim. v. 17. They are called *labourers*, and should not be *litherers*. They must labour with their people, *i. e.* to instruct, and comfort, and edify them. And, 2. Ministers are to *rule* their people also, so the word is rendered, 1 Tim. v. 17. Not rule with *rigour*, but with *love*. They must not *exercise dominion as temporal lords*; but rule as *spiritual guides*, by setting a good example to the flock. They are *over* the people in *the Lord*, to distinguish them from civil magistrates, and to denote also that they are but ministers *under* Christ, appointed by him, and must rule the people by Christ's laws, and not by laws of their *own*. This may also intimate the *end* of their office and all their labour; namely, the service and honour of the Lord. 3. They must also *admonish* the people, and that not only publicly, but privately, as there may be occasion. They must *instruct* them to *do well*, and should *reprove* them when they *do ill*. It is their duty not only to give good counsel, but also to give admonition: to give warning to the flock of the dangers they are liable to, and reprove for negligence or what else may be amiss.

2. What the duty of the people is towards their ministers. There is a mutual duty between ministers and people. If ministers should labour among the people; then, 1. The people must *know* them. As the shepherd should know his flock, so the sheep must know their shepherd. They must know his *person*, and hear his *voice*, and acknowledge *him* for their *pastor*, and pay due regard to his *teaching*, and *ruling*, and *admonitions*. 2. They must *esteem* their ministers *highly in love*; they should greatly value the *office* of the ministry, and honour and love the *persons* of their ministers, and shew their esteem and affection in all proper ways, and this *for their work's sake*, because their business is to promote the honour of Christ, and the welfare of mens souls. Note, Faithful ministers ought to be so far from being lightly esteemed because of their work, that they should be highly esteemed on the account thereof. The work of the ministry is so far from being a disgrace to them who upon other accounts deserve esteem, that it puts an honour upon them who are faithful and diligent, which otherwise they could lay no claim to; and will procure them that esteem and love among good people, which otherwise they could not expect.

(3.) He giveth divers other exhortations touching the duty Christians owe to one another.

1. *To be at peace among themselves*, ver. 13. Some understand this exhortation, according to the reading in some copies, as referring to the peoples duty to their minister, to live peaceably with them, and not raise and promote dissensions at any time between minister and people, which will certainly prove an hindrance to the success of a minister's work, and the edification of the people. This is certain, ministers and people should avoid every thing that tends to alienate their affections one from another. And the people should be at peace among themselves, doing all they can to hinder any differences from rising or continuing among them, and using all proper means to preserve peace and harmony.

2. *To warn the unruly*, ver. 14. There will be in all societies some that *walk disorderly*, who go out of their rank and station: And it is not only the duty of ministers, but of private Christians also, to warn and admonish them. Such should be *reproved* for their *sin*, and *warned* of their *danger*, and told plainly of the *injury* they do their *own souls*, and the *hurt* they may do to *others*: Such should be put in mind of what they should do, and be reproved for doing otherwise.

3. *To comfort the feeble-minded*, ver. 14. By these are intended the timorous and faint-hearted, or such as are dejected, and of a sorrowful spirit. Some are cowardly, and afraid of difficulties, and disheartned at the thoughts of hazards and losses, and afflictions; now such should be encouraged; we should not despise them, but comfort them: and who knows what good a kind and comfortable word may do them?

4. *To support the weak*, ver. 14. Some are not well able to perform their work, nor bear up under their burdens; we should therefore support them, and help their infirmities, and lift at one end of the burden, and so help to bear it. It is the grace of God indeed, that must strengthen and support such, but we should tell them of that grace, and endeavour to minister of that grace to them.

5. *To be patient towards all men*, ver. 14. We must bear and forbear. We must be *long-suffering*, and *suppress* our anger, if it begins to rise upon the apprehension of affronts or injuries; at least we must not fail to *moderate* our anger, and this duty must be exercised towards *all men*, good and bad, high and low, &c. We must not be *high* in our *expectations* and *demands*, nor *harsh* in our *resentments*, nor *hard* in our *impositions*, but endeavour to make the best we can of every thing, and think the best we can of every body.

6. *Not to render evil for evil to any man*, ver. 15. This we must look to, and be very careful about, *i. e.* We must by all means forbear to revenge ourselves: If others do us an injury, that will not justify us in returning it, in doing the same, or the like, or any other injury to them. It becomes us to forgive, as those that are, and that hope to be forgiven of God.

7. *Ever to follow that which is good*, ver. 15. *i. e.* In the general we must study to do what is our duty, and pleasing to God in all circumstances, whether men do us good turns or ill turns; whatever men do to us, we must do good to others. We must always endeavour to be beneficent and instrumental to promote the welfare of others, both *among ourselves*, in the first place to them that are of the household of faith, and then *as we have opportunity unto all men*, Gal. vi. 10.

16. Rejoice evermore. 17. Pray without ceasing. 18. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. 19. Quench not the spirit. 20. Despise not prophesyings. 21. Prove all things: hold fast that which is good. 22. Abstain from all appearance of evil.

Here we have divers short exhortations, that will not burden our memories, but will be of great use to direct the motions of our hearts and lives: for the duties are of great importance: and we may observe, how they are connected together, and have a dependence upon one another.

1. *Rejoice evermore*, ver. 16. This must be understood of *spiritual joy*: For we must *rejoice* in our creature-comforts, as if we *rejoiced not*, and must not expect *to live many years*, and *rejoice in them all*; but if we do *rejoice in God*, we may do that *evermore*. In *him our joy will be full*; and it is our fault if we have not *a continual feast*. If we are sorrowful upon any worldly account, yet still we may *always rejoice*, 2 Cor. vi. 10. Note, A religious life is a pleasant life, it is a life of constant joy.

2. *Pray without ceasing*, ver. 17. Note, The way to rejoice evermore, is to pray without ceasing. We should *rejoice* more, if we did *pray* more. We should keep up *stated times* for prayer, and *continue instant* in prayer. Pray always, and *not faint*: pray without weariness, and continue in prayer, till we come to that world, where prayer shall be swallowed up in praise. The meaning is not, that men should do nothing but pray, but that nothing else we do should hinder prayer in its proper season. Prayer will help forward, and not hinder all other lawful business, and every good work.

3. *In every thing give thanks*, ver. 18. And if we pray without ceasing, we shall not want matter for thanksgiving, *in every thing*: As we must in every thing make our requests known to God by supplications, so we must not omit thanksgiving, Phil. iv. 6. We should be thankful in *every condition*, even in adversity as well as prosperity. It is never so bad with us, but it might be worse. If we have never so much occasion to make our humble complaints to God, we never can have any reason to complain of God, and have always much reason to praise and give thanks; and the apostle saith, this is the *will of God in Christ Jesus concerning us*, that we do give thanks, *i. e.* seeing God is reconciled to us in Christ Jesus; in him and through him, and for his sake, he alloweth us to rejoice evermore, and appointeth us in every thing to give thanks. It is pleasing to God.

4. *Quench not the spirit*, ver. 19. For it is the Spirit of grace and supplication, that *helpeth our infirmities*, that assisteth us in our prayer and thanksgivings. Christians are said to be *baptized with the Holy Ghost, and with fire*. He worketh as fire, by enlightening and enlivening, and purifying the souls of men. We must be careful not to quench this holy fire. As fire is put out by *withdrawing fuel*; so we quench the Spirit, if we do *not stir up* our spirits, and all that is within us, to comply with the motions of the good Spirit; and as fire is quenched by *pouring water*, or putting a great quantity of dirt upon it, so we must be careful not to quench the holy Spirit, by *indulging to carnal lusts* and affections, not minding only earthly things.

5. *Despise not prophesyings*, ver. 20. for if we neglect the means of grace, we forfeit the Spirit of grace. By *prophesyings*

here we are to understand the *preaching of the word*; the interpretation and applying of the scriptures: and this we must *not despise*, but should prize and value, because it is the ordinance of God, appointed of him for our furtherance and increase in knowledge and grace, and holiness and comfort. We must not *despise preaching*, though it be plain, and not with enticing words of mens wisdom, and though we are told no more than what we knew before. It is useful, and many times needful to have our minds stirred up, our affections and resolutions excited to these things, that we knew before to be our interest and our duty.

6. *Prove all things, but hold fast that which is good*, ver. 21. This is a needful caution to prove all things: for though we must *put a value* on preaching, we must not take things *upon trust* from the preacher, but try them by the *law and the testimony*. We must search the scriptures, whether what they say be true or not. We must *not believe every spirit*, but must *try the spirits*: But we must not be *always* trying, *always unsettled*; no, at length we must be settled, and *hold fast that which is good*. When we are satisfied, that any thing is right, and true, and good, we must hold it fast, and not let it go, whatever *opposition* or whatever *persecution* we meet with for the sake thereof. Note, The doctrines of human infallibility, and implicit faith, and blind obedience, are not the doctrines of the Bible. Every Christian hath, and ought to have, the judgment of discretion, and should have *his senses exercised in the discerning between good and evil*, truth and falsehood, Heb. v. 13, 14. And *proving all things* must be in order to the *holding fast* that which is good. We must not always be seekers, or fluctuating in our minds, *like children tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine*.

7. *Abstain from all appearances of evil*, ver. 22. And this is a good means to prevent our being deceived with false doctrines, or unsettled in our faith; for our Saviour hath told us, *John vii. 17. If a man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God*. Corrupt affections indulged in the heart, and evil practices allowed of in the life, will greatly tend to promote fatal errors in the mind: Whereas purity of heart, and integrity of life, will dispose men to receive the truth in the love of it. We should therefore abstain from evil, and all *appearances of evil*, from sin, and that which *looks like sin*, and that *leads to it*, and *borders upon it*. He that is not shy of the *appearances* of sin, and who shuns not the *occasions* of sin, and who avoids not the *temptations* and *approaches* to sin, will not long abstain from the *actual commission* of sin.

23. And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly: and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it. 25. Brethren, pray for us. 26. Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss. 27. I charge you by the Lord, that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren. 28. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

These words conclude this epistle. In which observe,

(1.) Paul's prayer for them, ver. 23. He had told them in the beginning of this epistle, he always made mention of them in his prayers; and now he is writing to them, he listeth up his heart to God in prayer for them. Take notice,

1. To whom the apostle prays, namely, *The very God of peace*. He is the God of grace, and the God of peace and love: He is the author of peace and lover of concord; and by their peaceableness and unity, from God as the author, those things would best be obtained, which he prays for.

2. The things he prays for on behalf of the Thessalonians are; their sanctification, that *God would sanctify them wholly*; and their preservation, *that they might be preserved blameless*. He prays they may be *wholly sanctified*, *i. e.* that the *whole man* might be *sanctified*; and then that the whole man, spirit, soul, and body, might be *preserved*: or, he prays, that they might be *wholly sanctified*, *i. e.* *more perfectly*, for the best are sanctified but in part, while in this world; and therefore, we should pray for and press towards complete sanctification. And where the good work of grace is begun, it shall be carried on, be protected and preserved, and all those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus shall be preserved to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. And because, if God did not carry on his good work in the soul, that would miscarry; we should pray to God to perfect his work, and *preserve us blameless*, *i. e.* free from sin and impurity, till at length we are *presented faultless before the throne of his glory with exceeding joy*.

(2.) His comfortable assurance, that God would hear his prayer. *Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it*, ver. 24. The kindness and love of God had appeared to them in calling them to the knowledge of his truth, and the *faithfulness* of God was their security, that they should persevere to the end; and therefore the apostle assures them, God would do what he desired; he would effect what he had promised; he would accomplish all the good pleasure of his goodness towards them. Note, That *our fidelity to God depends upon his faithfulness to us*.

(3.) His

(3.) His request of their prayers: *Brethren, pray for us*, ver. 25. We should pray one for another; and *brethren* should thus express *brotherly love*. This great apostle did not think it beneath him to call the Thessalonians brethren, nor below him to request their prayers. Ministers stand in need of their peoples prayers; and the more people do pray for their ministers, the more good ministers may have from God, and the people may receive by their ministry.

(4.) His salutation: *Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss*, ver. 26. Thus the apostle sends a friendly salutation from himself, and Silvanus and Timotheus; and would have them salute each other in *their names*: and thus he would have them signify their mutual love and affection to one another, by the *kiss of charity*, 1 Pet. v. 14. which is here called an *holy kiss*, to intimate how cautious they should be of all impurity in the use of this ceremony then commonly practised; as it should not be a *treacherous* kiss like that of Judas, so not a *lascivious* kiss like that of the harlot, Prov. vii. 13.

(5.) His solemn charge for the reading this epistle, ver. 27. This is not only an exhortation, but an adjuration by the Lord.

And this epistle was to be read to all the holy brethren. It is not only *allowed* to the common people to read the scriptures, and what none should *prohibit*, but it is their indispensable *duty*, and what they should be *persuaded* to do. And in order to this, these holy oracles should not be kept concealed in an unknown tongue, but be translated into the *vulgar* languages; that *all* men being concerned to know the scriptures, they *all* may be able to read them, and be acquainted with them. The publick reading of the law was one part of the worship of the sabbath among the Jews in their synagogues, and the scriptures should be read in the publick assemblies of Christians also.

(6.) The apostolical benediction that is usual in other epistles: *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.* ver. 28. We need no more to make us happy, than to *know* that grace which our Lord Jesus Christ hath *manifested*, and be *interested* in that grace he hath *purchased*, and *partake* of that grace that *dwells* in him as the head of the church. This is an ever-flowing and over-flowing fountain of grace to supply all our wants.

AN

E X P O S I T I O N

OF THE

Second Epistle of St. PAUL to the THESSALONIANS,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS.

This second epistle was written soon after the former, and seems to be designed to prevent their running into a mistake, which might arise from some passages in the former epistle, concerning the second coming of Christ; as if it were near at hand. The apostle in this epistle is careful to prevent any wrong use, some among them might make of those expressions of his, that were agreeable to the dialect of the prophets of the Old Testament; and informeth them that there were many intermediate counsels yet to be fulfilled before that day of the Lord shall come, though, because it is sure, he had spoken of it as near. There are other things he writeth about for their consolation under sufferings, and exhortation and direction in duty.

CHAP. I.

After the introduction, ver. 1, 2. the apostle begins this epistle with an account of his high esteem for these Thessalonians, ver. 3, 4. He then comforteth them under their afflictions and persecutions, ver. 5—10. And tells them what his prayers were to God for them, ver. 11, 12.

1. PAUL, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians, in God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ: 2. Grace unto you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. 3. We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all towards each other aboundeth: 4. So that we our selves glory in you in the churches of God, for your patience and faith in all your persecutions, and tribulations that ye endure.

Here we have,

(1.) The introduction, ver. 1, 2. in the same words as in the former epistle. From whence we may observe, That as this apostle did not count it grievous to him to *write* the same things (Phil. iii. 1.) in his epistles, that he had *delivered* in preaching; so he willingly wrote the same things to *one* church as he did to *another*. And here the same words in the second epistle as in the former, sheweth us, that ministers ought not so much to regard the variety of expression and elegancy of stile, as the truth and usefulness of the doctrines they preach: And great care should be taken lest from an affectation of novelty in method and phrases, we advance new notions or doctrines contrary to the principles of natural or revealed religion, upon which this church of the Thessalonians was builded, as all true churches are; namely *in God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ*.

(2.) The high esteem this apostle had for them. He not only had a great *affection* for them, as he had expressed in his former epistle, and now again in his pious wish of grace and peace for them; but he also expresseth his great *esteem* for them. Concerning which observe,

1. *How* his esteem of them is expressed; viz.

(1.) He glorifieth God on their behalf: *We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet*, ver. 3: He chooseth rather

rather to speak of what was praise-worthy in them in a way of thanksgiving to God, than by commendation of them; and as what he mentions was matter of his rejoicing, he accounted it matter of thanksgiving, and it *was meet* or fit it should be so; for we are bound, and it is our duty to be thankful to God for all the good that is found in us or others: and it not only is an act of kindness to our fellow-Christians, but our duty to thank God on their behalf.

(2.) He also *glories in them before the churches of God*, ver. 4. The apostle never flattered his friends, but he took pleasure in commending them, and speaking well of them to the glory of God, and for the excitement and encouragement of others. Paul did not glory in his own gifts, nor his labour among them, but he gloried in the grace of God which was bestowed upon them, and so his glorying was good; because all the commendation he gave to them, and the pleasure he took himself, centered in the praise and glory of God.

2. For what he esteemed them and thanked God, *viz.* the increase of their faith, and love, and patience. In his former epistle, chap. i. 3. he gave thanks for their faith and love and patience; here he giveth thanks for the *increase* of all those graces, that they were not only *true* Christians, but *growing* Christians. Note, That where there is the truth of grace, there will be increase of it. The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. And where there is the increase of grace, God must have all the glory of it. We are as much indebted to him for the improvement of grace, and the progress of that good work, as we are for the first work of grace, and the very beginning of it. We may be tempted to think, that though when we were bad, we could not make ourselves good, yet when we are good we can easily make ourselves better; but we have as much dependence on the grace of God for the increasing the grace we have, as for the planting of grace when we had it not. The matter of the apostle's thanksgiving and glorying on behalf of the Thessalonians, was,

1. That their *faith did grow exceedingly*, ver. 3. They were more confirmed in the truth of gospel-revelations, and confided in gospel-promises, and had lively expectations of another world. The *growth* of their faith appeared by the *works* of faith; and where faith groweth, all other graces grow proportionably.

2. Their *charity abounded*, ver. 3. *i. e.* their love to God and man. Note, Where faith groweth, love will abound, for *faith worketh by love*; and not only the charity of some few of them, but of every one to each other, did abound. There were no such divisions among them as in some other churches.

3. Their *patience* as well as faith did increase in *all their persecutions and tribulations*. And then patience hath its perfect work, when it extendeth itself to *all* trials. There were many persecutions which the Thessalonians endured for the sake of righteousness, as well as other troubles which they met with in this calamitous life; yet they *endured all these*, by faith *seeing him that is invisible*, and looking to the *recompence of reward*; and endured them with *patience*, not with an insensibility under them, but with patient bearing them, and that from Christian principles, which kept them quiet and submissive, and afforded them inward strength and support.

5. Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer: 6. Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; 7. And to you who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, 8. In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: 9. Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; 10. When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.

Having mentioned their persecutions and tribulations, which they endured principally for the cause of Christ, the apostle proceedeth to offer several things for their comfort under them: As,

(1.) He tells them of the *present happiness* and advantage of their sufferings, ver. 5. Their faith being thus tried, and patience exercised, were improved by their sufferings, inasmuch that they were *counted worthy of the kingdom of God*. Their sufferings were a *manifest token of this*, that they were worthy or meet to be accounted Christians indeed, seeing they could suffer for Christianity. And the truth is, Religion, if it is worth any thing, is worth every thing; and those either have no religion at all, or none that is worth having, or know not how to value it, that cannot find in their hearts to suffer for it. Besides, from their patient suffering, it appeared that according to the righteous judg-

ment of God, they should be counted worthy of the heavenly glory: not by worthiness of *condignity*, but of *congruity* only; not that they could *merit* heaven, but were made *meet* for heaven. We cannot by all our *sufferings*, any more than by our *services*, merit heaven as a debt; but by our patience under our sufferings, we are qualified for the joy that is promised to patient sufferers in the cause of God.

(2.) He tells them next of the *future recompence* that shall be given to persecutors, and persecuted, *viz.*

1. There will be a punishment inflicted on *persecutors*. God will *recompense tribulation to them that trouble you*, ver. 6. And there is nothing that doth more infallibly mark a man for eternal ruin, than a spirit of persecution, and enmity to the name and people of God; as the faith and patience and constancy of the saints is to them an earnest of everlasting rest and joy, so the pride and malice and wickedness of their persecutors, is to them an earnest of everlasting misery: for every man carries about with him, and carries out of the world with him, either his heaven or his hell: God will render a recompence, and will trouble them that trouble his people. This he hath done sometimes in this world, witness the dreadful end of many persecutors; but especially this he will do in the other world, where the portion of the wicked must be *weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth*.

2. There is a reward for them that are *persecuted*; God will *recompense* their trouble *with rest*, ver. 7. There is a *rest* that remains for the people of God; a rest from *sin* and *grievance*. Though many may be the troubles of the righteous now, yet God will deliver them out of them all. The future rest will abundantly recompense all their present troubles. The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed. There is enough in heaven, to countervail all that we may lose or suffer for the name of Christ in this world. The apostle saith, *To you that are troubled rest with us*. In heaven ministers and people shall *rest* together, and *rejoice* together, who suffer together here; and the meanest Christian shall rest with the greatest apostle: Nay, what is far more, if we suffer for Christ, we shall also reign with him; 2 Tim. ii. 12. Concerning this future recompence we are further to observe,

First, The *certainty* of it, proved by the righteousness and justice of God. *It is a righteous thing with God*, ver. 6. to render to every man according to his works. And the thoughts of this should be terrible to wicked men and persecutors, and the great support of the righteous, and such as are persecuted: For seeing there is a righteous God, there will be a righteous recompence, and God's suffering people shall lose nothing by their sufferings, and their enemies will gain nothing by their advantages against them.

Secondly, The *time* when this righteous recompence shall be made, *viz.* *When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven*, ver. 7. That will be the day of the *revelation of the righteous judgment of God*; for then will God judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath appointed, even Jesus Christ the righteous judge. The righteousness of God doth not so visibly appear unto all men in the procedure of his providence, as it will in the process of the great judgment-day. The scripture hath made known to us the judgment to come, and we are bound to receive the revelation here given concerning Christ. As,

1. That the Lord Jesus will in that day *appear from heaven*. Now the heavens retain him, they conceal him; but then he will be revealed and made manifest: He will come in all the pomp and power of the upper world, *from whence* we look for the Saviour.

2. He will be revealed with his *mighty angels*, ver. 7. or the angels of his *power*: These will attend upon him to grace the solemnity of that great day of his appearance; they will be the ministers of his justice and mercy in that day; they will summon the criminals to his tribunal, and gather in the elect, and be employed in executing his sentence.

3. He will come in *flaming fire*, ver. 8. A fire goeth before him that shall consume his enemies. The earth and all the works that are therein shall be *burnt up*, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. This will be a *trying* fire to try every man's works, a *refining* fire to purify the saints, who shall share in the purity, and partake of the felicity of the new heaven and the new earth; a *consuming* fire to the wicked. His light will be piercing, and his power consuming to all those who in that day shall be found as chaff.

4. The *effects* of this appearance will be terrible to some, and joyful to others.

(1.) They will be *terrible* to some; for he will then take vengeance on the wicked.

1. On those that sinned against the principles of *natural* religion, and rebelled against the light of nature; *that know not God*, ver. 8. Though the invisible things of him are manifested in the things that are seen.

2. On those that rebel against the *light of revelation*, who *obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ*. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light. This is the great crime of multitudes, the gospel

gospel is revealed to them, and they will not *believe* it; or if they pretend to believe it, they will not *obey* it. Note, The believing the *truths* of the gospel is in order to our obeying the *precepts* of the gospel: There must be the *obedience of faith*. To such persons as are here mentioned, the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ will be terrible, because of their doom which is mentioned, *ver. 9*. Where observe,

1. They will then be *punished*. Though sinners may be long reprieved, yet they will be punished at last. Their misery will be a proper punishment for their crimes, and only what they have deserved. They did sin's work, and must receive sin's wages.

2. Their punishment will be no less than *destruction*, not of their *being*, but of their *bliss*; not that of the body alone, but both as to body and soul.

3. This destruction will be *everlasting*. They shall be always dying, and yet never die. Their misery will run parallel with the line of eternity. The chains of darkness are everlasting chains, and the fire everlasting fire. It must needs be so, since the punishment is inflicted by an eternal God, fastening upon an immortal soul, set out of the reach of divine mercy and grace.

4. This destruction shall come from the *presence of the Lord*, i. e. immediately from God himself. Here God punisheth sinners by creatures, by instruments; but then he will take the work into his own hands. It will be destruction from the Almighty, more terrible than the consuming fire, which consumed Nadab and Abihu, which came from before the Lord.

5. It shall come from the *glory of his power*, or from his glorious power. Not only the *justice* of God, but his almighty power will be glorified in the destruction of sinners; and who knows the power of his anger? He is *able* to cast into hell.

(2.) It will be a *joyful* day to some, even to the saints, unto them that do *believe and obey the gospel*. And then the apostle's testimony concerning this day, will be *confirmed and believed*, *ver. 10*. In that bright and blessed day,

1. Christ Jesus will be glorified and admired by his saints: They shall behold his glory, and admire it with pleasure; they will glorify his grace, and admire the wonders of his power and goodness towards them, and sing hallelujahs to him in that day of his triumph, for their complete victory and happiness.

2. Christ will be glorified and admired *in* them. His grace and power will then be manifested and magnified, when it shall appear what he hath purchased *for*, and wrought *in*, and bestowed *upon* all those that believe in him: As his wrath and power will be made known in and by the destruction of his enemies; so his grace and power will be magnified in the salvation of his saints. Note, Christ's dealings with those that believe, will be what the world one day shall wonder at. Now, they are *a wonder to many*: But how will they be wondered at in this great and glorious day; or rather, how will Christ, whose name is *wonderful*, be admired when the mystery of God shall be finished? Christ will not be so much admired in the glorious esteem of angels, that he will bring from heaven with him; as in the many saints, *the many sons*, he will bring to glory.

11. Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of *this* calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of *his* goodness, and the work of faith with power: 12. That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

In these verses the apostle again tells the Thessalonians of his earnest and constant prayer for them: He could not be present with them; yet he had a constant remembrance of them; they were much upon his thoughts, and he wished them well, and could not express his good will and good wishes to them, better than in earnest, constant prayer to God for them: *Wherefore also we pray*, &c. Note, The believing thoughts and expectation of the second coming of Christ should put us upon prayer to God for ourselves and others. We should *watch and pray*, so our Saviour directeth his disciples, *Luke xi. 36*. *Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that you may be counted worthy to stand before the Son of man*. Observe,

(1.) What the apostle prayed for, *ver. 11*. And it is of great concern to be well instructed what to pray for; and without divine *instruction* we know not what to pray for, as without divine *assistance* we shall not pray in such a manner as we ought. Our prayers should be suitable to our expectations. Thus the apostle prayeth for them,

1. That God would *begin* his good work of grace in them; so we may understand this expression: *That our God would count you* (or as it might be read, *make you*) *worthy of this calling*. We are called with an high and holy calling; we are called to God's kingdom and glory; and no less than the inheritance of the saints is the hope of our calling, nothing less than the enjoyment of that glory and felicity which shall be revealed when Christ Jesus

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shall be revealed from heaven. Now, if this be our calling, our great concern should be to be *worthy* of it, or *meet* and prepared for this glory: And because we have no worthiness of our own, but what is owing purely to the grace of God, we should pray that he would make us worthy, and then count us worthy of this calling, or that he would make us meet to partake of the inheritance of the saints in light, *Col. i. 12*.

2. That God would *carry on* the good work that is begun, and *fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness*. The good pleasure of God denoteth his gracious purposes towards his people, which flow from his goodness, and are full of goodness towards them; and it is from thence, that all good doth come to us. If there be any good *in* us, it is the fruit of God's good-will *to* us; it is owing to the good pleasure of his goodness, and therefore is called *grace*. Now, there are various and manifold purposes of grace and good-will in God towards his people; and the apostle prays, that *all of them* may be fulfilled or accomplished towards these Thessalonians. There are several good works of grace begun in the hearts of God's people which proceed from this good pleasure of God's goodness, and we should desire that they may be completed and perfected. In particular the apostle prayeth, that God would fulfil in them the *work of faith with power*. Note, 1. The fulfilling the work of faith, is in order to the fulfilling of every other good work. And, 2. It is the power of God, that not only begins, but that carrieth on, and perfecteth the work of faith.

(2.) *Why* the apostle prayed for these things, *ver. 12*, viz. *That the name of the Lord Jesus might be glorified*; and this is the end we should aim at in every thing we do and desire, that God and Christ in all things might be glorified: Our own, and others happiness should be subordinate unto this ultimate end. Our good works should so shine before men, that others may glorify God, that Christ may be glorified in and by us, and then we shall be glorified in and with him. And this is the great end and design of the grace of our God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, which is manifested to us, and wrought in us; or thus, it is according to the grace of God and Christ, i. e. It is an agreeable thing, considering the grace that is manifested to us, and bestowed on us by God and Christ, that we direct all we do to the glory of our Creator and Redeemer.

CHAP. II.

The apostle is very careful to hinder the spreading of an error which some among them had fallen into, concerning the coming of Christ, as being very near, *ver. 1, 2, 3*. Then he proceedeth to confute this error he cautioned them against, by telling them of two great events that were antecedent to the coming of Christ, viz. *A general apostasy, and the revelation of antichrist*, concerning whom the apostle tells them many remarkable things about his name, his character, and his rise, and his fall, and his reign, and the sin and ruin of his subjects, *ver. 3—12*. He then comforts them against the terror of this apostasy, and exhorts them to *steadfastness*, *ver. 13—15*. And concludeth with a prayer for them, *ver. 16, 17*.

1. **N**OW we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, 2. That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter, as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. 3. Let no man deceive you by any means: —

From these words it appeareth, that some among the Thessalonians had mistaken the apostle's meaning, in what he had written in his former epistle about the coming of Christ, by thinking it was near at hand; that Christ was just ready to appear, and come to judgment: Or, it may be, some among them pretended, that they had the knowledge of this by particular revelation from the Spirit, or else from some words they had heard from the apostle, when he was with them, or some letter he had written, or they pretended he had written to them or some other person: And hereupon, the apostle is careful to rectify this mistake, and to prevent the spreading of this error. Observe, If errors and mistakes arise among Christians, we should take the first opportunity to rectify them, and hinder the spreading thereof; and good men will be especially careful to suppress errors, that may arise from a mistake of their words and actions, though that which was spoken or done was never so innocent or well. We have a subtle adversary, who watcheth all opportunities to do mischief, and will sometimes promote errors even by means of the words of scripture. Observe,

(1.) How very earnest and solicitous this apostle was to prevent mistakes. *We beseech you, brethren, &c. ver. 1*. He *intreats* them as brethren, who might have *charged* them, as a father chargeth his children: He sheweth great kindness and condescension; and insinuateth himself into their affection: And this is the best

best way to deal with men, when we would preserve or recover them from errors, to deal gently and lovingly with them; rough and rigorous treatment will but exasperate their spirits, and prejudice them against the reasons we may offer. He *obtest*s, and even *conjureth* them in the most solemn manner, *By the coming of Christ*, &c. The words are in the form of an oath, and his meaning is, that if they *believed* Christ would come, and if they *desired* he would come, and *rejoiced* in the hope of his coming, they should be careful to avoid the error, and the evil consequence thereof, that he was now cautioning them against. From this form of obtestation used by the apostle, we may observe,

1. That it is most certain, that the Lord Jesus Christ will come to judge the world, that he will come in all the pomp and power of the upper world in the last day, to execute judgment upon all. Whatever uncertainty we are at, or whatever mistakes may arise about the *time* of his coming, his coming *itself* is certain. This hath been the faith and hope of all Christians in all ages of the church; nay, it was the faith and hope of the Old Testament saints, ever since Enoch the seventh from Adam, who said, *Behold, the Lord cometh*, &c. *Jude* ver. 14.

2. At the second coming of Christ, *all the saints will be gathered together to him*; and this mention of the gathering of the saints together unto Christ at his coming, sheweth, that the apostle speaketh of Christ's coming to judgment at the *last day*, and not of his coming to destroy Jerusalem. He speaketh of a proper, and not a metaphorical advent; and as it will be part of Christ's honour in that day, so it will be the completing of the happiness of his saints.

(1.) That they *all* shall be gathered *together*. There will then be a general meeting of all the saints, and none but saints; all the Old Testament saints that got acquaintance with Christ by the dark shadows of the law, and saw this day at a distance; and all the New Testament saints, to whom life and immortality were brought to light by the gospel: They will all be *gathered together*. There will then come from the four winds of heaven, all that are, or ever were, or ever shall be from the beginning to the end of time. All shall be gathered together.

(2.) That they shall be gathered *together to Christ*. He will be the great center of their unity. They shall be gathered together *to him* to be *attendants on him*, to be *assessors with him*, to be *presented by him* to the Father, to be *with him* for ever, and altogether happy in his presence to all eternity.

3. The doctrines of Christ's coming, and our gathering together to him, are of great moment and importance to Christians; otherwise they would not be the proper matter of the apostle's obtestation. We ought therefore not only to believe these things, but highly to account of them also, and look upon them as things we are greatly concerned in, and should be much affected with.

(2.) The thing itself the apostle cautions the Thessalonians against, is, that they should not be deceived about the time of Christ's coming, and so *be shaken in mind, or be troubled*. Note, That errors in the mind tend greatly to weaken our faith, and cause us trouble; and such as are weak in faith, and of troubled minds, are oftentimes apt to be deceived, and fall a prey to seducers.

1. The apostle would not have them be deceived. *Let no man deceive you by any means*, ver. 3. There are many that lie in wait to deceive, and they have many ways of deceiving; we have reason therefore to be cautious, and stand upon our guard. Some deceivers will pretend new revelations, and others misinterpret scripture, and others will be guilty of gross forgeries; divers means and artifices of deceit men will use, but we must be careful that no man deceive us *by any means*. The particular matter in which the apostle cautions them not to be deceived, is about the near approach of Christ's coming, as if it was to have been in the apostles days; and as harmless as this error might have seemed to many, yet because it was indeed an error, it would have proved of bad consequence to many persons. Therefore,

2. He giveth them warning, and would not have them soon shaken in mind, or be troubled.

1. He would not have their *faith weakened*. We should firmly believe the second coming of Christ, and be settled and established in the faith of this; but there was danger lest the Thessalonians, if they apprehended the coming of Christ was just at hand, upon the finding they, or others whom they too much regarded, were mistaken as to the *time*, should thereupon question the truth or certainty of the *thing* itself; whereas they ought not to waver in their minds, as to this great thing which is the faith and hope of all the saints. False doctrines are like the winds that toss the water to and fro, and they are apt to unsettle the minds of men, who are sometimes, as *unstable as water*. Then,

2. He would not have their *comforts lessened*, that they should not be *troubled* or affrighted with false alarms. It is likely the coming of Christ was represented in so much terror, as to trouble many serious Christians among them; though in itself it should be matter of the believer's hope and joy; or else many might be troubled with the thoughts how surprizing this day would be, or with the fear of their unpreparedness, or upon the reflexion on

their mistake about the time of Christ's coming; we should always watch and pray, but must not be discouraged, nor uncomfortable at the thoughts of Christ's coming.

3.—For *that day shall not come*, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition: 4. Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. 5. Remember ye not, that when I was yet with you, I told you these things? 6. And now ye know what withholdeth, that he might be revealed in his time. 7. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth, *will let*, until he be taken out of the way. 8. And then shall that wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: 9. *Even him* whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, 10. And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness, in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. 11. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: 12. That they all might be damned, who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

In these words the apostle confuteth the error he had cautioned them against, and giveth the reasons why they should not expect the coming of Christ as just at hand. There were several events previous to the second coming of Christ; in particular he tells them,

(1.) There would be a *general apostasy*, *there would come a falling away first*, ver. 3. By this *apostasy* we are not to understand a defection in the *state* or from civil government, but in *spiritual* or religious matters, from sound doctrine, and instituted worship and church-government, and a holy life. The apostle speaks of some very great apostasy, which would be very general, and not only of some converted Jews or Gentiles, but such as should be very general, though gradual, and what would give occasion to the revelation or rise of *antichrist*, that *man of sin*. This he tells them, *ver. 5.* he had told them of, when he was with them, with design, no doubt, that they should not take offence or be stumbled at it. And let us observe, that no sooner was Christianity planted and rooted in the world, but there began to be a defection in the Christian church. It was so in the Old Testament church; presently after any considerable advance made in religion there followed a defection; soon after the promise there was revolting, *e. g.* soon after that men began to call upon the name of the Lord, all flesh corrupted their way; soon after the covenant with Noah, the Babel builders bid defiance to heaven: Soon after the covenant with Abraham, his seed degenerated in Egypt: Soon after the Israelites were planted in Canaan, when the first generation was worn off, they forsook God and served Baal: Soon after God's covenant with David, his seed revolted and served other gods: Soon after the return out of captivity, there was a general decay of piety, as appeareth by the story of Ezra and Nehemiah; and therefore it was no strange thing, that after the planting of Christianity there should come a falling away.

(2.) There would be a *revelation of that man of sin*, ver. 3. *i. e.* antichrist would take his rise from this general apostasy. The apostle *afterwards* speaketh of the revelation of that *wicked one*, ver. 8. intimating the *discovery* which should be made of his wickedness, in order to his ruin: Here he seemeth to speak of his *rise*, which should be occasioned by that general apostasy he had mentioned; and seemeth to intimate, that all sorts of false doctrines and corruptions should center in him. Great disputes have been, who or what is intended by this man of sin, and son of perdition; and if it is not certain that the papal power and tyranny is principally or *only* intended, yet this is plain, what is here said doth very exactly agree thereto. For observe,

1. The *names* of this person, or rather the *state* and power here spoken of: He is called the *man of sin*, to denote his egregious wickedness; not only is he addicted to, and practiseth wickedness himself, but he doth also promote, and countenance, and command sin and wickedness in others; and he is the *son of perdition*, because he himself is devoted to certain destruction, and is the instrument of destroying many others, both in soul and body. These names may properly be applied, for these reasons, to the papal state, and thereto agree also,

2. The *characters* here given, *ver. 4. viz.*

(1.) That he *opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or is worshipped*; and thus have the bishops of Rome not only opposed God's authority, and that of the civil magistrate, who are called gods, but have exalted themselves above God, and earthly

earthly governours, in demanding greater regard to their commands than to the commands of God, or the magistrate.

(2.) *As God, he sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God:* As God was in the temple of old, and worshipped there, and is in and with his church now; so the antichrist here mentioned, is some usurper of God's authority in the Christian church, who claims divine honours; and to whom can this better agree than to the bishops of Rome, to whom the most blasphemous titles have been given, "as *Dominus Deus noster Papa*, "Our Lord God the Pope; *Deus alter in terra*, another God on earth; *Idem est dominium Dei & Papæ*, the dominion of God "and the Pope is the same?"

3. His rise is mentioned, *ver. 6, 7.* Concerning which, we are to observe two things:

(1.) That there was something that did hinder, or with-hold, or did *let until it was taken away.* This is supposed to be the power of the Roman empire, which the apostle did not think fit to mention more plainly at that time; and it is notorious that while this power continued, that prevented the advances of the bishops of Rome to that height of tyranny, which soon afterwards they arrived to.

(2.) That this mystery of iniquity was gradually to arrive to its height; and so it was in effect, that the universal corruption of doctrine and worship in the Romish church did come in by degrees, and the usurpation of the bishops of Rome was gradual, not all at once; and thus the mystery of iniquity did the more easily, and almost insensibly prevail. The apostle justly calls it a *mystery of iniquity*, because wicked designs and actions were concealed under false shews and pretences, at least they were concealed from the common views and observation: By pretended devotion, superstition and idolatry were advanced; and by a pretended zeal for God and his glory, bigotry and persecution were promoted. And he tells us this mystery of iniquity did even then begin, or did *already work*; while the apostles were yet living, *the enemy come and sowed tares*; there were then the *deeds of the Nicolaitans*, persons that pretended zeal for Christ, but really opposed him. Pride and ambition, and worldly interest of church-pastors and church-rulers, as in Diotrephes, and others, were the early working of the *mystery of iniquity*, which, by degrees, came to that prodigious height, as hath been visible in the church of Rome.

4. The *fall* or ruin of the antichristian-state is declared, *ver. 8.* The head of this antichristian kingdom, is called *that wicked one*, or that lawless person who sets up a human power in competition with, and contradiction to the divine dominion and power of the Lord Jesus Christ: but as he would thus manifest himself to be the man of sin, so the revelation or *discovery* of this to the world would be the sure presage, and the means of his ruin. The apostle doth assure the Thessalonians the Lord would *consume and destroy him*; the consuming him precedeth his final destruction, and that is by the *Spirit of his mouth*, by his word of command; the pure word of God accompanied with the Spirit of God, will discover this mystery of iniquity, and make the power of antichrist to consume and waste away; and in due time it shall be totally and finally destroyed, and this will be by the *brightness of Christ's coming*. Note, The coming of Christ to destroy the wicked, will be with peculiar glory, and eminent lustre and brightness.

5. The apostle further describeth the *reign and rule* of this man of sin. Where we are to observe,

(1.) The *manner* of his coming or ruling, and *working*. In the general, that it is after the *example of Satan*, the grand enemy of souls, the great adversary of God and man. He is the great patron of error and lies, the sworn enemy of the *truth as it is in Jesus*, and all the faithful followers of Jesus. More particularly it is with satanical *power and deceit*: a divine power is pretended for the support of this kingdom, but it is only after the *working of Satan*; signs and wonders, visions and miracles, are pretended; by these the papal kingdom was first set up, and hath all along been kept up, but they have false signs to support false doctrines; and lying wonders, or only pretended miracles that have served their cause, things false in fact, or fraudulently managed, to impose upon the people: and the diabolical deceits are notorious, with which the antichristian state hath been supported. The apostle calls it *all deceivableness of unrighteousness*, *ver. 10.* Others may call them *pious frauds*, but the apostle called them unrighteous and *wicked frauds*; and indeed all fraud, which is contrary to truth, is an impious thing. Many are the subtle artifices the *man of sin* hath used, and various are the plausible pretences by which he hath beguiled unwary and unstable souls to embrace false doctrines, and submit to his usurped dominion.

(2.) The *persons* are described, who are his *willing subjects*, or most likely to become such, *ver. 10.* They are such as *love not the truth, that they may be saved.* They heard the truth, it may be, but they did not like it, or *love* it; they could not bear sound doctrine, and therefore easily imbibed false doctrines; they had some notional knowledge of what was true, but they indulged some powerful prejudices, and so became a prey to seducers; had they loved the truth, they would have persevered in it, and been preserved by it; but no wonder if they easily parted with what they never had any love to: And of these persons it is said,

that they *perish*, or are lost; they are in a lost condition, and in danger to be lost for ever. For,

6. We have the *sin and ruin of the subjects* of antichrist's kingdom declared, *ver. 11, 12.*

(1.) Their *sin* is this: *They believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness*: They did not love the truth, and therefore they did not believe it; and because they did not believe the truth, therefore they had pleasure in unrighteousness, or in wicked actions, and were pleased with false notions. Note, An erroneous mind and vicious life do often go together, and help forward one another.

(2.) Their *ruin* is thus expressed, *God shall send them strong delusions to believe a lie.* Thus he will punish men for their unbelief, and for their dislike of the truth, and love to sin and wickedness; not that God is the author of sin, but in righteousness he sometimes withdraws his grace from such sinners as are here mentioned: He giveth them over to Satan, or leaveth them to be deluded by his instruments; he giveth them up to *their own hearts lusts*, and leaveth them to themselves, and then sin will follow of course, yea, the worst of wickedness, that shall end at last in eternal damnation: And God is just when he inflicts spiritual judgments here, and eternal punishments hereafter, upon such who have no love to the truths of the gospel, who will not believe them, nor live suitable to them, but indulge false doctrines in their minds, and wicked practices in their lives and conversations.

13. But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth: 14. Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. 15. Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.

Here observe,

(1.) The *consolation* the Thessalonians might take against the terrors of this apostasy, *ver. 13, 14.* For they were *chosen to salvation*, and called to the obtaining of glory. Note, When we hear of the apostasy of many, it is matter of great comfort and joy, that there is a *remnant according to the election of grace*, that do and shall persevere; and especially we should rejoice, if we have reason to hope that we are of that number. The apostle reckoned himself *bound in duty* to be thankful to God on this account; *we are bound to give thanks to God always for you.* He had often given thanks on their behalf, and he is still abounding in thanksgiving for them, and there was good reason, because they were *beloved of the Lord*, as appeared in this matter, their security from apostatizing. And this preservation of the saints is owing,

1. To the stability of the election of grace, *ver. 13.* And therefore were they *beloved* of the Lord, because God had *chosen them from the beginning*: He had *loved* them with an eternal and *everlasting love*. Concerning this election of God, we may observe, (1.) The *eternal date* thereof, it is from the *beginning*; not the beginning of the *gospel*, but the beginning of the *world*, before the foundation of the world, *Eph. i. 4.* Then, (2.) The *end* to which they were chosen; and that is salvation, complete and eternal salvation from sin and misery, and the full fruition of all good. (3.) The *means* in order to obtaining this end; namely, *sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth*. The decree of election therefore connecteth the end and the means, and these must not be separated. We are not elected of God, *because we were holy*, but *that we might be holy*. Being chosen of God, we must not live as we list; but if we are chosen to *salvation* as the *end*, we must be prepared for it by *sanctification*, as the *necessary means* to obtain that end; which sanctification is by the operation of the *holy Spirit* as the author, and by *faith* on our part. There must be the belief of the truth, without which there can be no true sanctification, nor perseverance in grace, nor obtaining salvation. Faith and holiness must be joined together, as well as holiness and happiness; therefore our Saviour prayed for Peter, that his faith might not fail, *Luke xxii. 32.* and for his disciples, *John xvii. 17.* Sanctify them by thy truth, thy word is truth.

2. To the efficacy of the gospel-call, *ver. 14.* As they were chosen to salvation, so they were *called thereunto by the gospel*. Whom he did predestinate, them he also called, *Rom. viii. 30.* The *outward* call of God is by the *gospel*; and this is rendered effectual by the *inward* operation of the *Spirit*. Note, Wherever the gospel comes, it calls and inviteth men to the obtaining of glory; it is a call to honour and happiness, even the *glory of our Lord Jesus Christ*, i. e. the glory he hath purchased, and the glory he is possessed of, to be communicated unto them that believe in him, and obey his gospel: Such shall be with Christ to *behold his glory*, and they shall be glorified with Christ, and partake of his glory. Hereupon there followeth,

(2.) An *exhortation* to steadfastness and perseverance. *Therefore, brethren, stand fast*, *ver. 15.* Observe, He doth not say ye are chosen to salvation, and therefore ye may be careless and secure; but *therefore stand fast*. God's grace in our election and vocation is

is so far from superseding our diligent care and endeavour, that it should quicken and engage us to the greatest resolution and diligence. So the apostle John having told them he wrote unto, that they had received the anointing which should abide in them, and that they should abide in him, [in Christ] subjoineth this exhortation, *Now abide in him*, 1 John ii. 27, 28. The Thessalonians are exhorted to steadfastness in their Christian profession, or to hold fast the traditions which they had been taught, i. e. the doctrine of the gospel, which had been delivered by the apostle, by word or epistle. As yet the canon of scripture was not complete, and therefore some things were delivered by the apostles in their preaching, under the conduct of the infallible Spirit, which Christians were bound to observe as coming from God; other things were afterwards by them committed to writing, as the apostle had written a former epistle to these Thessalonians; and these epistles were written, as the writers were moved by the Holy Ghost. Note, There is no argument from hence for regarding oral traditions in our days, now the canon of scripture is complete, as of equal authority with the sacred writings. Such doctrines and duties as were taught by the inspired apostles, we must steadfastly adhere to; but we have no certain evidence of any thing delivered by them, more than what we find contained in the holy scriptures.

16. Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace, 17. Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.

In these words we have the apostle's earnest prayer for them; in which observe,

(1.) To whom he prayeth, namely, to our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God even our Father. We may and should direct our prayers, not only to God the Father, through the mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ; but also unto our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and should pray in his name unto God, not only as his Father, but as our Father in and through him.

(2.) From what he taketh encouragement in his prayer, namely, from the consideration of what God had already done for him and them; Which hath loved us, and given us everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace, ver. 16. Where observe, 1. The love of God is the spring and fountain of all the good we have, or hope for; our election, vocation, justification, and salvation, is all owing to the love of God in Christ Jesus. 2. From this fountain in particular, doth all our consolation flow. And the consolation of the saints is an everlasting consolation. The comforts of the saints are not dying things; they shall not die with them: The spiritual consolations God giveth, none shall deprive them of; and God will not take them away; because he loveth them with an everlasting love, therefore they shall have everlasting consolations. 3. Their consolation is founded on the hope of eternal life. They rejoice in hope of the glory of God, and are not only patient, but joyful in tribulations; and there is good reason for these strong consolations, because the saints have good hope: Their hope is grounded on the love of God, and the promise of God, and the experience they have had of the power, the goodness, and the faithfulness of God, and it is good hope through grace; the free grace and mercy of God is what they hope for, and what their hopes are founded on, and not on any worth or merit of their own.

(3.) What it is that he asketh of God for them: That he would comfort their hearts, and establish them in every good word and work, ver. 17. God had given them consolations, and he prayeth that they might have more abundant consolation. There was good hope, through grace, they should be preserved, and he prayeth they might be established; and it is observable how comfort and establishment are here joined together. Note therefore, 1. That comfort is a means of establishment; for the more pleasure we take in the word, and work, and ways of God, the more likely we shall be to persevere therein. And, 2. Our establishment in the ways of God, is a likely means in order to comfort; whereas if we are wavering in faith, and of a doubtful mind, or if we are halting, and faltering in our duty, no wonder if we are strangers to the pleasures and joys of religion. What is it that lieth at the bottom of all our uneasiness, but our unsteadiness in religion? We must be established in every good word and work, in the word of truth and the work of righteousness: And Christ must be honoured by our good works, and good words; and they who are sincere will endeavour to do both, and in so doing they may hope for comfort and establishment, till at length our holiness and our happiness be completed.

CHAP. III.

In the close of the foregoing chapter, the apostle had prayed earnestly for the Thessalonians, and now he desireth their prayers, encouraging them to trust in God, to which he subjoins another petition for them, ver. 1—5. He then proceedeth to give them commands and directions for the correcting some things he was

informed were amiss among them, ver. 6—15. And concludeb with benedictions and prayers, ver. 16—18.

1. **F**INALLY brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified even as it is with you; 2. And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith. 3. But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil. 4. And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do, and will do the things which we command you. 5. And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.

In these words observe,

(1.) The apostle desires the prayers of his friends, *Finally brethren, pray for us*, ver. 1. He always remembered them in his prayers, and would not have them forget him and his fellow-labourers, but bear them on their hearts at the throne of grace. Note, 1. This is one way by which the communion of saints is kept up, not only by their praying together, or with one another, but by their praying for one another, when they are absent one from another. And thus they that are at a great distance may meet together at the throne of grace; and thus they that are not capable of doing, or receiving any other kindness, may yet, this way, do and receive real and very great kindness. 2. It is the duty of people to pray for their ministers, and not only for their own pastors, but also for all good and faithful ministers. And, 3. Ministers need, and therefore should, desire the prayers of their people. How remarkable is the humility, and how engaging the example, of this great apostle, who was so mighty in prayer himself, and yet despised not the prayers of the meanest Christian, but desired an interest in them. Observe further, What they are desired and directed to pray for; namely,

1. For the success of the gospel ministry: *That the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified*, ver. 1. This was the great thing that blessed Paul was most solicitous about. He was more solicitous that God's name might be sanctified, and his kingdom come, and his will be done, than he was about his own daily bread. He desired the word of the Lord might run; so it is in the original, i. e. that it might get ground, that the interest of religion in the world might go forward, and not backward; and not only go forward, but go apace. All the forces of hell were then, and still are, more or less, raised and mustered to oppose the word of the Lord, to hinder its publication and success; we should pray therefore, that oppositions may be removed, that so the gospel may have free course to the ears, and to the hearts and consciences of men, that it may be glorified in the conviction and conversion of sinners, the confutation of gainfayers, and the holy conversation of the saints. God who magnified the law, and made it honourable, will glorify the gospel and make that honourable, and so will glorify his own name. And good ministers and good Christians may very well be contented to be little, to be any thing, to be nothing, if Christ be magnified and his gospel be glorified. Paul was now at Athens, or, as some think, at Corinth, and would have the Thessalonians pray that he might have as good success there, as he had had at Thessalonica, that it might be as well with others, even as it was with them. Note, If ministers have been successful in one place, they should desire to be successful in every place, where they may preach the gospel.

2. For the safety of gospel ministers. He doth not ask their prayers for preferment, but for preservation, that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men, ver. 2. Note, That they who are enemies to the preaching of the gospel, and persecutors of the faithful preachers of it, are unreasonable and wicked men. They act against all the rules and laws of reason and religion, and are guilty of the greatest absurdity and impiety. Not only in the principles of atheism and infidelity, but also in the practice of vice and immorality, and especially in persecution, there is the greatest absurdity in the world, as well as impiety. There is need of the spiritual protection, as well as the assistance of godly and faithful ministers, for these are as the standard-bearers that are most struck at; and therefore all that wish well to the interest of Christ in the world should pray for them: *For all men have not faith*, i. e. many do not believe the gospel; they will not embrace it themselves, and no wonder if such are restless and malicious in their endeavours to oppose the gospel, decry the ministry, and disgrace the ministers of the word: and too many have not common faith or honesty; there is no confidence that we can safely put in them, and we should pray to be delivered from such who have no conscience nor honour, who never regard what they say or do. We may sometimes be in as much or more danger from false and pretended friends, as from open and avowed enemies.

(2.) He encourageth them to trust in God. We should not only pray to God for his grace, but also place our trust and confidence in his grace, and humbly expect what we pray for. Observe,

1. What

1. What the good is which we may expect from the grace of God, *viz.* Establishment and preservation from evil; and the best Christians stand in need of these benefits: 1. That God would *establish them*. This the apostle had prayed for on their behalf, *chap. ii. 17.* and now he doth encourage them to expect this favour; and we can stand no longer than God holds us up; unless he *bold up our goings in his paths, our feet will slide*, and we shall fall. 2. That God will *keep them from evil*. We have as much need of the grace of God for our perseverance to the end, as for the beginning of the good work. The *evil of sin* is the greatest evil, but there are *other evils* God will also preserve his saints from, the evil that is in the world, yea from *all evil* to his heavenly kingdom.

2. What encouragement we have to depend upon the grace of God. The *Lord is faithful*. He is faithful to his *promises*; and is the Lord who cannot lye, who will not alter the thing that is gone out of his mouth. When once the promise therefore is made, performance is sure and certain. He is faithful to his *relation*, a faithful God, and a faithful friend; we may depend upon his filling up all the relations he stands in to his people. Let it be our care to be true and faithful in our promises, and to the relations we stand in to this faithful God. He adds,

3. A further ground of hope that God would do this for them, seeing they *did and would do the things they were commanded*, *ver. 4.* The apostle had this confidence in *them*, and that was founded upon his confidence in *God*; for there is otherwise no confidence in man. Their obedience is described by doing what he and his fellow-labourers had commanded them; which was no other thing than the *commandments of the Lord*: For the apostles themselves had no further commission than to teach men *to observe and do what their Lord had commanded*, *Matt. xxiii. 20.* And as the experience the apostle had of their obedience for the time past, was one ground of his confidence that they would do the things commanded them for the time to come; so this is one ground to hope, that *whatsoever we ask of God we shall receive of him, because we keep his commandments and do those things that are pleasing in his sight*, *1 Joh. iii. 22.*

(3.) He maketh a short prayer for them, *ver. 5.* It is a prayer for spiritual blessings. Two things of the greatest importance the apostle prayeth for. 1. That their hearts might be *brought into the love of God*, *i. e.* to be in love with God as the most excellent and amiable being, the best of all beings; and this is not only most reasonable and necessary in order to our happiness, but is our happiness itself. It is a great part of the happiness of heaven itself, where this love shall be made perfect. And we can never attain to this, unless God by his grace *direct our hearts* aright, for our love is apt to go astray after other things. Note, We sustain a great deal of damage by the misplacing our affections; it is our sin and our misery that we misplace our affections upon wrong objects. And if God direct our love aright upon himself, the rest of the affections will thereby be rectified. 2. That a *patient waiting for Christ* might be joined with this love of God. There is no true love of God, without faith in Jesus Christ; we must *wait* for Christ, which supposeth our faith in him, that we believe he came once in flesh, and will come again in glory: And we must *expect* this second coming of Christ, and be careful to get ready for it. There must be a *patient waiting*, enduring with courage and constancy all that we may meet with in the mean time: And we *have need of patience*, and need of divine grace to exercise Christian patience, the *patience of Christ*, (as some read the words) *i. e.* patience for Christ's sake and after Christ's example.

6. Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw your selves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us. 7. For your selves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not our selves disorderly among you, 8. Neither did we eat any mans bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travel night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you: 9. Not because we have not power, but to make our selves an ensample unto you to follow us. 10. For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, That if any would not work, neither should he eat. 11. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busy-bodies. 12. Now them that are such, we command, and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread. 13. But ye, brethren, be not weary in well-doing. 14. And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. 15. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

The apostle having commended their obedience for the time past, and mentioned his confidence in their obedience for the

time to come, proceedeth to give them commands and directions to some that were faulty, correcting some things that were amiss among them. Observe, That the best society of Christians may have some faulty persons among them, and some things that ought to be reformed. Perfection is not to be found on this side heaven; evil manners beget good laws; the disorders that Paul was informed to be among the Thessalonians, occasioned the good laws we find in these verses, that are of constant use to us and all others whom they may concern. Observe,

(1.) That which was amiss among the Thessalonians, which is expressed, 1. More *generally*; there were some that *walked disorderly, not after the tradition they received* from the apostle, *ver. 6.* Some of the brethren were guilty of this disorderly walking, *i. e.* they did not live regularly, nor govern themselves according to the rules of Christianity, nor agreeable to their profession of religion; not according to the precepts delivered by the apostle, which they had received, and pretended to pay a regard unto. Note, It is required of those who have received the gospel, and profess a subjection to it, that they live according to the gospel: If they do not, they are to be counted disorderly persons. 2. In *particular* there were among them some *idle persons and busy-bodies*, *ver. 11.* This the apostle was so credibly informed of, that he had sufficient reason to give commands and directions with relation to such persons, how they ought to behave, and how the church should carry it towards them.

1. There were some among them that were idle, *not working at all*, or doing nothing. It doth not appear that they were gluttons, or drunkards, but idle, and therefore disorderly people. It is not enough for any to say they do *no hurt*; for it is required of all persons that they *do good*, in the places and relations providence hath placed them. It is probable these persons had a notion (by misunderstanding some passages in the former epistle) concerning the near approach of the coming of Christ, which served them for a pretence to leave off the work of their callings, and live in idleness. Note, It is a great error, or abuse of religion, to make it a cloke for idleness, or any other sin. If we were sure that the day of judgment were never so near, we must notwithstanding do the work of the day in its day, that when our Lord cometh *he may find us so doing*. The servant that waiteth for the coming of his Lord aright, must be working as his Lord hath commanded, that all may be ready when he cometh. Or it may be, these disorderly persons pretended that the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free, discharged them from the services and business of their particular callings and employments in the world: whereas they were *to abide in the same calling wherein they were called of God, and therein abide with God*, *1 Cor. vii. 20, 24.* Industry in our *particular callings* as men, is a duty required of us by our *general calling* as Christians; or perhaps the general charity that was then among Christians to their poor brethren, encouraged some to live in idleness, as knowing the church would maintain them: whatever was the cause, they were much to blame.

2. There were *busy-bodies* among them: And it should seem, by the connexion, that the same persons who were idle, were busy-bodies also. This may seem to be a contradiction, but so it is that most commonly such persons as have no business of their own to do, or who neglect that, do busy themselves in other mens matters: If we are idle, the devil and a corrupt heart will soon find us somewhat to do. The mind of man is a busy thing; if it be not employed in doing *good*, it will be doing *evil*. Note, Busy-bodies are disorderly walkers, *i. e.* such as are guilty of vain curiosity, and impertinent meddling with things that do not concern them, and troubling themselves and others with *other mens matters*. The apostle warns Timothy, *1 Tim. v. 13.* to beware of such *who learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house, and are not only idle but tattlers also, and busy-bodies, speaking things which they ought not*.

(2.) The good laws which were occasioned by these evil manners. Concerning which we may take notice,

1. *Whose laws they are*. They are commands of *the apostles of our Lord*, given in the name of their Lord and ours, *i. e.* the commands of our Lord himself. *We command you, brethren, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ*, *ver. 6.* Again, *we command and exhort you by our Lord Jesus Christ*, *ver. 12.* The apostle useth words of authority and intreaty; and where disorders are to be rectified or prevented, there is need of both. The authority of Christ should awe our minds unto obedience, and his grace and goodness should allure us.

2. *What the good laws and rules are*. The apostle giveth directions to the whole church, and commands to those disorderly persons, and an exhortation to those in particular who did well among them.

1. His commands and directions to the *whole church*, regard, (1.) Their behaviour towards the disorderly persons that were among them; which is thus expressed, *ver. 6.* *to withdraw themselves from such*, and afterwards *to mark that man and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed*; yet *not to count him as an enemy, but to admonish him as a brother*. The directions of the apostle are carefully to be observed in this matter, how we are to carry it to disorderly persons. We must be very cautious in church-censures and church-discipline. We must, 1. Note

that man who is suspected or charged with not obeying the word of God, or walking contrary thereto, *i. e.* we must have sufficient proof of his fault before we proceed further. We must, 2. *Admonish* him in a friendly manner; we must put him in mind of his sin, and of his duty; and this should be done privately, *Matt.* xviii. 17. Then if he will not hear, we must, 3. *Withdraw from him*, and not company with him, *i. e.* we must avoid familiar converse and society with such, for two reasons, namely that we may not learn his evil ways: for he that followeth vain and idle persons, and keepeth company with such, is in danger of becoming like them. And another reason is, for the shaming, and so the reforming them that offend: that when idle and disorderly persons see how their loose practices are disliked by all wise and good people, they may be ashamed of them, and walk more orderly. Love therefore to the persons of our offending brethren, even when we hate their vices, should be the motive even of our withdrawing from them; and even those that are under the censures of the church, must not be *accounted as enemies*, ver. 15. for if they be reclaimed and reformed by these censures, they will recover their credit and comfort, and right to church-privileges as a brother. (2.) Their general conduct and behaviour ought to be according to the good example the apostle and those which were with him had given them; *Your selves know how ye ought to follow us*, ver. 7. Those that planted religion among them had set a good example before them; and the ministers of the gospel should be ensamples to the flock. And it is the duty of Christians not only to walk according to the traditions of the apostles, and the doctrines they preached, but also according to the good example they set before them: *To be followers of them, so far as they were followers of Christ*. The particular good example the apostle mentions was their diligence, that was so different from that which was found in those disorderly walkers he takes notice of: *We behaved not our selves disorderly among you*, ver. 7. *i. e.* we did not spend our time idly, in idle visits, idle talk, idle sports. They took pains in their ministry, in preaching the gospel, and in getting their own living. *Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought*, ver. 8. Though he might justly have demanded a maintenance, because they that preach the gospel may of right expect to live by the gospel. This is a just debt that people owe to their ministers, and the apostle had power or authority to have demanded this, ver. 9. but he waved his right from affection to them, and for the sake of the gospel, and that he might be an example for them to follow, ver. 9. that they might learn how to fill up time, and always be employed in somewhat that would turn to good account.

2. He commands and directs *those that lived idle lives*, to reform and set themselves to their business. He had given commandments to this purpose, as well as a good example of this, when he was among them; *Even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any man would not work, neither should he eat*, ver. 10. It was a proverbial speech among the Jews, *He that doth not labour, doth not deserve to eat*. The labourer is worthy of his meat, but what is the loiterer worthy of? It is the will of God every man should have a calling, and mind his calling, and make a business of it, and not live like useless drones in the world. Such persons do what in them lieth to defeat the sentence, *In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat thy bread*. It was not only the humour of the apostle, who was an active stirring man himself, and therefore would have every body else to be so too, but it was the command of our Lord Jesus Christ, that *with quietness we work, and eat our own bread*, ver. 12. Men ought some way or other to earn their own living, otherwise they do not eat their *own* bread. Observe, There must be work or labour in opposition to idleness, and there must be quietness in opposition to being busy-bodies in other mens matters. We must study to be quiet and do our own business. This

is an excellent but rare composition, to be of an active yet quiet spirit; active in our own business, and yet quiet as to other peoples.

3. He exhorteth *those that did well*, not to be weary in well-doing, ver. 13. *q. d.* go on and prosper. The Lord is with you while you are with him. See that whatever you do that is good, you persevere therein. Hold on your way, and hold out to the end. You must never give over, nor tire in your work. It will be time enough to rest when you come to heaven, that *everlasting rest that remains for the people of God*.

16. Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always, by all means. The Lord *be* with you all. 17. The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write; 18. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen.

In this conclusion of the epistle we have the apostle's benediction and prayers for these Thessalonians. Let us desire them for our selves, and our friends. There are three blessings pronounced upon them, or desired for them.

(1.) That God would give them peace. Note, 1. *Peace* is the blessing pronounced or desired, and by peace we may understand all manner of prosperity: Here it may signify in particular peace with *God*; peace in their *own minds* and consciences; peace *among themselves*, and peace with *all men*. 2. This peace is desired for them *always*, or in every thing; and he desired they might have all good things at all times. 3. Peace by *all means*: That as they enjoyed the means of grace, they might with success use all the means and methods of peace too; for peace is often difficult, as it is always desirable. 4. That *God would give* them peace, who is the Lord of peace. And if we have any peace that is desirable, God must give it, who is the *author of peace and lover of concord*. We shall neither have peaceable dispositions our selves, nor find men disposed to be at peace with us, unless the God of peace give us both.

(2.) That the presence of God might be with them, *The Lord be with you all*. And we need nothing *more* to make us safe and happy, nor can we desire any thing *better* for our selves and our friends, than to have God's gracious presence with us and them. This will be a guide and guard in every way that we may go, and our comfort in every condition we may be in. It is the presence of God that maketh heaven to be heaven, and that will make this earth to be like to heaven. No matter where we are if God be with us, nor who is absent if God be present with us.

(3.) That the *grace of the Lord Jesus Christ might be with them*. So this apostle concluded his first epistle to these Thessalonians; and it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that we may comfortably hope to have peace with God, and enjoy the presence of God, for he hath made them *nigh that were afar off*: It is this grace that is all in all to make us happy: This is what the apostle admired and magnified on all occasions, what he delighted and trusted in; and by this salutation or benediction *written with his own hand*, as the *token of every epistle*, (when the rest was written by an amanuensis) he took care lest the churches he wrote unto should be imposed on by counterfeit epistles, which he knew would be of dangerous consequence.

Let us be thankful that we have the canon of scripture complete, and by the wonderful and special care of divine providence preserved pure and uncorrupt, through so many successive ages; and not dare to add to it, nor diminish from it: Let us believe the divine original of the sacred scriptures, and conform our faith and practice to this our sufficient and only rule, *which is able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus*. Amen.

A N

E X P O S I T I O N

O F T H E

First Epistle of St. P A U L to T I M O T H Y,

W I T H

P R A C T I C A L O B S E R V A T I O N S.

Hitherto Paul's epistles were directed to churches, now follow some to particular persons; two to Timothy, one to Titus, and another to Philemon; all three ministers: Timothy and Titus were evangelists, an inferior order to the apostles, as appears by that, Eph. iv. 11. Some prophets, some apostles, some evangelists. Their commission and work was much the same with that of the apostles, to plant churches, and water the churches that were planted, and accordingly they were itinerants, as we find Timothy was. Timothy was first converted by Paul, and therefore he calls him his own son in the faith; we read of his conversion, Acts xvi. 23.

The scope of these two epistles is, to direct Timothy how to discharge his office as an evangelist at Ephesus, where he now was, and where Paul ordered him for some time to reside, to perfect the good work which he had begun there. As for the ordinary pastoral charge of that church, he had very solemnly committed it to the presbytery, as appears from Acts xx. 17. where he charges the presbyters to feed the flock of God, which he had purchased with his own blood.

C H A P. I.

After the inscription in ver. 1, 2. we have, 1. The charge given to Timothy, ver. 3, 4. 2. The true end of the law, ver. 5—12. where he shews it is intirely agreeable to the gospel. 3. He mentions his own call to be an apostle; for which he expresses his thankfulness, ver. 12—16. 5. His doxology, ver. 17. 6. A renewal to the charge to Timothy, ver. 18. And of Hymeneus and Alexander, ver. 19, 20.

1. **P**AUL an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, *which is our hope*; 2. Unto Timothy, my own son in the faith: *grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father, and Jesus Christ our Lord.* 3. As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine, 4. Neither give heed to fables, and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying, which is in faith: *so do.*

Here is, 1. The inscription of the epistle; from whom it is sent, *Paul an apostle of Jesus Christ*; constituted an apostle by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ. His credentials were unquestionable; he had not only a commission, but a commandment, not only from God our Saviour, but from Jesus Christ: He was a preacher of the gospel of Christ, and a minister of the kingdom of Christ. Observe, God is our Saviour, *Jesus Christ, which is our hope.* Observe, Jesus Christ is a Christian's hope; our hope is in him, all our hope of eternal life is built upon him; Christ is in us the hope of glory, *Col. i. 27.* He calls Timothy his *own son*, because he had been an instrument of his conversion, and because he had been a son that served him; served with him in the gospel, *Phil. ii. 22.* Timothy had not been wanting in the duty and observance of a son to Paul, and Paul was not wanting in the care and tenderness of a father to him.

2. The benediction is, *grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father.* Some have observed, that whereas in all the epistles to the churches, the apostolical benediction is *grace and peace*; in these two epistles to Timothy, and that of Titus, it is *grace, mercy, and peace*: As if ministers had more need of God's mercy than other men. Ministers need more grace than others, to discharge their duty faithfully, and they need more mercy than others, to pardon what is amiss in them; and if Timothy, so eminent a minister, must be indebted to the mercy of God, and needed the encrease and continuance of it, how much more do we ministers in these times, who have so little of his excellent spirit?

3. Paul tells Timothy what was the end of his appointing him to this office; I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus. Timothy had a mind to have gone with Paul, was loth to go from under his wing, but Paul would have it so, it was necessary for the publick service. *I besought thee*, saith he: Though he might assume an authority to command him, yet *for love's sake he chose rather to beseech him.* Now his business was, to take care to fix both the ministers and the people of that church. *Charge them that they teach no other doctrine* than what they have received, *i. e.* that they do not add to the Christian doctrine, under pretence of improving it, or making up the defects of it; that they do not alter it, but stick to it as it was delivered to them. Observe, 1. Ministers must not only be charged to preach the true doctrine of the gospel, but charged to preach no other doctrine: *If an angel from heaven preached any other doctrine, he was an anathema*, *Gal. i. 8.*

Observe, 2. That in the times of the apostles there were attempts made to corrupt Christianity; we are not as many that corrupt the word, *2 Cor. ii. 17.* otherwise this charge to Timothy might have been spared. 3. He must not only see to it, that he did not preach any other doctrine, but he must charge others that they might not add any thing of their own unto the gospel, or take any thing from it, but that they preach it pure and uncorrupt. He must also take care to prevent their regarding *fables and endless genealogies* and strifes of words. This is often repeated in these two epistles, as *chap. iv. 7. vi. 4. 2 Tim. ii. 23.* as well as in the epistle to Titus. As among the Jews there were some that brought Judaism into Christianity; so among the Gentiles there were some that brought Paganism into Christianity. Take heed of those, saith he, watch against them, it

it will be the corrupting and ruining of religion among you, for *these minister questions rather than edifying*. Observe, That that which ministers questions is not for edifying; that which gives occasion for doubtful disputes pulls down the church rather than builds it up. And I think by a parity of reason, every thing else that ministers questions rather than godly edifying, should be disclaimed and disregarded by us, such as an uninterrupted succession in the ministry from the apostles down to these times, the absolute necessity of episcopal ordination, and the intention of the minister to the efficacy and validity of the sacraments he administers, &c. These are as bad as Jewish fables and endless genealogies, for they involve us in inextricable difficulties, and tend only to shake the foundations of a Christian's hope, and to fill his mind with perplexing doubts and fears. Observe here, That godly edifying should be the end ministers should aim at in all their discourses, that Christians may be improving in godliness, and growing up to a greater likeness to the blessed God. Observe farther, That godly edifying must be in faith; the gospel is the foundation on which we build, and it is by faith that we come to God at first, *Heb. xi. 6*. And it must be in the same same way and by the same principle of faith that we must be edified. Again, ministers should avoid as much as may be, what will occasion disputes, and would do well to insist on the great and practical points of religion, about which there can be no disputes; for even disputes about great and necessary truths, draw off the mind from the the main design of Christianity, and eat out the vitals of religion, which consist in practice and obedience, as well as in faith, that we may not hold the truth in unrighteousness, but may keep the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.

5. Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned: 6. From which some having swerved, have turned aside unto vain jangling; 7. Desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm. 8. But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully; 9. Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for man-slayers, 10. For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for men-stealers, for lyars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine, 11. According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.

Here the apostle instructs Timothy how to guard against the Judaizing teachers, or others that mingled fables and endless genealogies with the gospel. He shews the use of the law, and glory of the gospel.

1. He shews the end and use of the law: It is intended to promote love, *for love is the fulfilling of the law*, *Rom. xiii. 10*.

1. *The end of the commandment is charity*, or love, *Rom. xiii. 8*. The main scope and drift of the divine law is to engage us to the love of God and one another; and whatever tends to weaken either our love to God, or love to the brethren, tends to defeat the end of the commandment; and surely the gospel that obliges us to love our enemies, to do good to them that hate us, &c. *Matt. v. 44*. does not design to lay aside or supersede a commandment, the end whereof is love, so far from it, that on the other side we are told, that though we had all advantages, and wanted charity, we are but a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal, *1 Cor. xiii. 1*. *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples*, if ye love one another, *John xiii. 35*. Those therefore who boasted of their knowledge of the law, but used it only as a colour for the disturbance that they gave to the preaching of the gospel, under pretence of zeal for the law, dividing the church, and distracting it; they defeated that which was the very end of the commandment, and that is love; love out of a pure heart, a heart purified by faith, purified from corrupt affections. In order to the keeping up of holy love, our hearts must be cleansed from all sinful love, love out of a good conscience kept without offence. Those that are careful to keep a good conscience from a real belief of the truth of the word of God, which doth enjoin it, here called, a *faith unfeigned*; those answer the end of the commandment.

Here we have the concomitants of that excellent grace charity, they are three. 1. A pure heart, there it must be seated, and from thence it must take its rise. 2. A good conscience, which we must exercise ourselves daily, that we may not only get it, but that we may keep it, *Acts. xxiv. 15*. 3. Faith unfeigned must also accompany it, for it is love without dissimulation, the faith that works by it must be of the like nature, genuine and sincere. Now some that set up for teachers of the law swerved

from the very end of the commandment: Set up for disputers, but their disputes proved *vain jangling*; set up for teachers, but they pretended to teach others what they themselves did not understand. If the church be corrupted by such teachers, we must not think it strange, for we see from the beginning it was so.

Observe, 1. When persons, especially ministers, swerve from the great law of charity, the end of the commandment, they will turn aside to vain jangling; when a man misses his end and scope, it is no wonder every step he takes is out of the way. 2. Jangling, especially in religion, is vain, it is unprofitable and useless as to all that is good, and it is very pernicious and hurtful; and yet many peoples religion consists of little else but vain jangling. 3. Those who deal much in vain jangling are fond and ambitious to be teachers of others, they desire, that is, they affect the office of teaching. 4. It is too common for men to intrude into the office of the ministry, when they are very ignorant of those things about which they are to speak; they understand neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm, and by such learned ignorance, no doubt they edify their hearers very much.

2. *The use of the law*, ver. 8. *the law is good if a man use it lawfully*. The Jews used it unlawfully, as an engine to divide the church, an umbrage to the malicious opposition they made to the gospel of Christ; they set it up for justification, and so used it unlawfully. We must not therefore think to set it aside, but use it lawfully, i. e. for the restraint of sin. The abuse which some have made of the law, does not take away the use of it; but when a divine appointment hath been abused, call it back to its right use, and take away the abuses, for the law is still very useful as a rule of life; though we are not under it as under a covenant of works, but yet it is good to teach us what is sin and what is duty. It is *not made for a righteous man*; i. e. It is not made for those that do observe it, for if we could keep the law, righteousness would be by the law, *Gal. iii. 21*. but it is made for wicked persons, to restrain them, to check them, and to put a stop to vice and profaneness. It is the grace of God that changes mens hearts, but the terrors of the law may be of use to tie their hands and restrain their tongues. A righteous man does not want those restraints, which are necessary for the wicked; or at least the law is not made primarily and principally for the righteous, but for sinners of all sorts, whether in a greater or lesser measure, ver. 9, 10. In this black roll of sinners, he particularly mentions breaches of the second table-duties, which we owe to our neighbour, against the fifth and sixth commandments, murderers of fathers and mothers, and man-slayers; against the seventh, whoremongers, and them that defile themselves with mankind; against the eighth, men-stealers; against the ninth, lyars and perjured persons; and then he closes his account with this, *and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine*. Some understand this as an institution of a power in the civil magistrate to make laws against such notorious sinners as are instanced in, and to see those laws put in execution.

(2.) He shews the glory and grace of the gospel. Paul's epithets are expressive, significant, and many times every one is a sentence: As here, ver. 11. *According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God*. Let us learn from hence,

1. To call God *the blessed God*, infinitely happy in the enjoyment of himself and his own perfections.

2. To call the gospel *the glorious gospel*, for so it is: Much of the glory of God appears in the works of creation and providence, but much more in the gospel, where it *shines in the face of Jesus Christ*. Paul reckoned it a great honour put upon him, and a great favour done him, that this glorious gospel was committed to his trust; i. e. the preaching of it; the framing of it is not committed to any man or company of men in the world. The settling of the terms of salvation in the gospel of Christ is God's own work, but the publishing of it to the world is committed to the apostles and ministers.

Note here, 1. The ministry is a trust, for the gospel was committed unto this apostle; it is an office of trust as well as of power, and the former more than the latter; for this reason ministers are called stewards, *1 Cor. iv. 1*. 2. It is a glorious trust, because the gospel committed to them is a glorious gospel; it is a trust of very great importance, God's glory is very much concerned in it. Lord! what a trust is committed to us! How much grace do we want to be found faithful in this great trust?

12. And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; 13. Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious. But I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief: 14. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant, with faith, and love which is in Christ Jesus. 15. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. 16. Howbeit, for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering, for

a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting. 17. Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

Here he returns thanks to Jesus Christ for putting him into the ministry. Observe,

1. It is Christ's work to put men into the ministry, *Acts xxvi.* 17. God condemned the false prophets among the Jews in these words, *I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied,* Jer. xxiii. 21. Ministers, properly speaking, cannot make ministers, much less can persons make themselves ministers; for it is Christ's work, as king and head, prophet and teacher of his church.

2. Those whom he puts into the ministry he *enables* for it, whom he calls he qualifies: Those ministers that are no way fit for their work, nor have ability for it are not of Christ's putting into the ministry, though there are different qualifications as to gifts and graces.

3. Christ gives not only ability but fidelity to those whom he puts into the ministry: He *counted me faithful*, and none are counted faithful, but those whom he makes so. Christ's ministers are trusty servants, and they ought to be so, who have so great a trust committed to them.

4. A call to the ministry is a great favour, for which those that are so called ought to give thanks to Jesus Christ. *I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who hath put me into the ministry.* Now the more to magnify the grace of Christ in putting him into the ministry, he gives an account of his conversion.

1. What he was before his conversion; *A blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious*, Saul breathed out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, *Acts ix.* 1. He made havock of the church, *Acts viii.* 3. A blasphemer of God, a persecutor of the saints, and injurious to both. Many times those that are designed for great and eminent services, are left to themselves before their conversion, to fall into great wickedness; that the mercy of God may be the more glorified in their remission, and the grace of God in their regeneration. The greatness of sin is no bar to our acceptance with God, no, nor to our being employed for him if it be truly repented of.

Observe here, 1. Blasphemy, persecution, and injuriousness, are very great and heinous sins, and those who are guilty of them are sinners before God exceedingly; to blaspheme God is immediately and directly to strike at God, to persecute his people is to endeavour to wound him through their sides, and to be injurious, is to be like Ishmael whose hand was against every one, and every one was against him: For such invade God's prerogative, and encroach upon the liberties of their fellow-creatures. 2. True penitents, to serve a good purpose, will not be backward to own their former condition before they were brought home to God, this good apostle often confessed what his former life had been as *Acts xxii.* 4, 26.—x. 11.

2. See the great favour of God to him; *but I obtained mercy.* This was a blessed *but* indeed a great favour, that so notorious a rebel should find mercy with his prince. If Paul had persecuted the Christians wilfully, knowing them to be the people of God, for ought I know, he had been guilty of the unpardonable sin; but because he did it ignorantly and in *unbelief*, he *obtained mercy.*

Note, 1. What we do ignorantly is a less crime than what we do knowingly; a sin of ignorance is a sin, for he that knew not his master's will, but did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes, *Luke xii.* 48. Ignorance in some cases will extenuate a crime, though it do not take it away.

2. Unbelief is at the bottom of what sinners do ignorantly; they do not believe God's threatenings, otherwise they could not do as they do. 3. For these reasons St. Paul obtained mercy, *But I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly, in unbelief.* 4. Here was mercy for a blasphemer, a persecutor, and for an injurious person, but I obtained mercy, I a blasphemer, &c.

Here he takes notice of the abundant grace of Jesus Christ, *ver.* 14. The conversion and salvation of great sinners is owing to the grace of Christ, his *exceeding abundant grace*, even that grace of Christ which appears in his glorious gospel, *ver.* 15. *This is a faithful saying, &c.* Here we have the sum of the whole gospel, *that Jesus Christ came into the world.* The Son of God took upon him our nature, was *made flesh and dwelt among us*, John i. 14. He came into the world *not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance*, Matt. ix. 13. His errand into the world was to seek and find, and so *save them that were lost*, Luke xix. 10. The ratification of this is, *That it is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation.* It is good news, *worthy of all acceptation*; and yet not too good to be true, for *it is a faithful saying.* *It is a faithful saying*, and therefore worthy to be embraced in the arms of faith: It is *worthy of all acceptation*, and therefore to be received with holy love, which refers to the foregoing verse, where the grace of Christ is said to abound *in faith and love.* And in the close of the verse Paul applies it to himself, *Of whom I am chief.* Paul was a sinner of the first rank; so he acknowledges himself to have been, for he breathed out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, &c. *Acts ix.* 1, 2. No. cxii.

Persecutors are some of the worst of sinners: Such a one Paul had been; or, of *whom am I chief*, i. e. of pardoned sinners *I am chief.* It is an expression of his great humility, he that elsewhere calls himself the *least of saints*, Ephes. iii. 8. here calls himself the *chief of sinners.*

Observe, 1. Christ Jesus is come into the world, the prophecies concerning his coming are now fulfilled. 2. He came to save sinners, he came to save those that could not save and help themselves. 3. Blasphemers and persecutors are the chief of sinners, so St. Paul reckoned them. 4. The chief of sinners may become the chief of saints; so this apostle was, for he was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles, 2 *Cor.* xi. 5. for Christ came to save the chief of sinners. 5. This is a very great truth, it is a faithful saying, these are true and faithful words, which may be depended on. 6. It deserves to be received, to be believed by all of us for our comfort and encouragement.

The mercy which Paul found with God, notwithstanding his great wickedness before his conversion, he speaks of,

1. For the encouragement of others to repent and believe; *ver.* 16. *For this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe.* It was an instance of the long-suffering of Christ, that he would bear so much with one that had been so very provoking, and it was designed for a pattern to all others, that the greatest of sinners might not despair of mercy with God.

Note here, 1. Our apostle was one of the first great sinners converted to Christianity. 2. He was converted and obtained mercy for the sake of others as well as of himself, he was a pattern to others. 3. The Lord Jesus Christ shews great long-suffering in the conversion of great sinners. 4. Those that obtain mercy believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, for without faith it is impossible to please God, *Heb.* xi. 6. 5. Those that believe on Christ *believe on him to life everlasting*; they believe to the saving the soul, *Heb.* x. 39.

2. He mentions it to the glory of God, having spoken of the mercy he had found with God, he could not go on with his letter, without inserting a thankful acknowledgment of God's goodness to him; *Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory, for ever and ever. Amen.*

Observe, 1. That grace which we have the comfort of, God must have the glory of. Those that are sensible of their obligations to the mercy and grace of God, will have their hearts enlarged in his praises: Here is praise ascribed to him as *the King eternal, immortal, invisible.* 2. When we have found God good, we must not forget to speak him great, and his kind thoughts of us must not at all abate our high thoughts of him, but rather increase them. God had taken particular cognizance of Paul, and shewed him mercy, and taken him into communion with himself, and yet he calls him *the King eternal, &c.* God's gracious dealings with us should fill us with admiration of his glorious attributes: He is *eternal*, without beginning of days or end of life, or change of time: He is the ancient of days, *Dan.* vii. 9. He is *immortal*, and the original of immortality; he only hath immortality, 1 *Tim.* vi. 16. for he cannot die; *invisible*, for he cannot be seen with mortal eyes, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen or can see, 1 *Tim.* vi. 16. *the only wise God*, Jude 25. he only is infinitely wise, and the fountain of all wisdom; *To him be glory for ever and ever*; i. e. Let me be for ever employed in giving honour and glory to him, as the thousand thousands do, *Rev.* v. 12, 13.

18. This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare, 19. Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away, concerning faith have made shipwrack. 20. Of whom is Hymeneus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.

Here is the charge he gives to Timothy to proceed in his work with resolution, *ver.* 18. Observe here, The gospel is a *charge committed* to the ministers of it; it is committed to their trust to see that it be duly applied according to the intent and meaning of it, and the design of its great author. It seems there had been prophecies before concerning Timothy, that he should be taken into the ministry, and should prove eminent in the work of the ministry; and this encouraged Paul to commit this charge to him.

Observe, 1. The ministry is a *warfare*, it is a good warfare against sin and Satan, and under the banner of the Lord Jesus, who is the captain of our salvation, *Heb.* ii. 10. and in his cause, and against his enemies, ministers are in a particular manner engaged. 2. Ministers must *war this good warfare*; i. e. must execute their office diligently and courageously, notwithstanding their oppositions and discouragements. Note, 3. The prophecies which went before concerning Timothy, are here mentioned as a motive to stir him up to a vigorous and conscientious discharge of his

his duty; so the good hopes that others have entertained concerning us should excite us to our duty, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare.

Ver. 19. *Holding faith and a good conscience.* Observe, That we must hold both faith and a good conscience, and those that put away a good conscience will soon make shipwreck of faith. Let us live up to the directions of a renewed enlightened conscience, and keep *conscience void of offence*, Acts xxiv. 16. a conscience not debauched by any vice or sin, and that will be a means of preserving us sound in the faith; and we must look to the one as well as the other, for the mystery of the faith must be held in a pure conscience, 2 Tim. iii. 9. As for those that had made shipwreck of the faith, he instances in two, Hymeneus and Alexander, that had made a profession of the Christian religion, but had quitted that profession, and Paul had *delivered them to Satan*, had declared them to belong to the kingdom of Satan, and, as some think, had, by an extraordinary power, delivered them to be terrified or tormented by Satan, *that they might learn not to blaspheme*, i. e. not to contradict or revile the doctrine of Christ, and the good ways of the Lord. Observe the primary design of the highest censures in the primitive church, was to prevent further sin, and to reclaim the sinner: In this case it was for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus, 1 Cor. v. 5.

Observe, 1. Those who love the service and work of Satan, are justly delivered over to the power of Satan, *whom I have delivered to Satan*. 2. God can, if he pleases, work by contraries; Hymeneus and Alexander are delivered to Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme, when one would rather think they would learn of Satan to blaspheme. 3. Those that have put away a good conscience, and made shipwreck of faith, will not stick at any thing, blasphemy not excepted. 4. Therefore let us hold faith and a good conscience, if we would keep clear of blasphemy, for if we once let go our hold of these, we do not know where we shall stop.

CHAP. II.

In this chapter St. Paul treats, 1. Of Prayer, with many reasons for it, ver. 1—9. 2. Of womens apparel, ver. 9, 10. 3. Of their subjection, with the reasons of it, ver. 11, 12, 13, 14. 4. A promise given for their encouragement in child-bearing, ver. 15.

1. **I** EXHORT therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men: 2. For kings, and for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. 3. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour: 4. Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. 5. For *there is one God*, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus: 6. Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. 7. Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lye not) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity. 8. I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting:

Here is,

(1.) A charge given to Christians to pray for all men in general, and particularly for all in authority. Timothy must take care that this was done; Paul doth not send him any prescribed form of prayer, as we have reason to think he would if he had intended, that ministers should be tied to that way of praying; but, in general, that they should make *supplications and prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks*. *Supplications*, for the averting of evil; *prayer*, for the obtaining of good; *intercessions* for others; and *thanksgivings* for mercies already received. Paul thought it enough to give them general heads; they having the scripture to direct them in prayer, and the Spirit of prayer poured out upon them, needed not any further direction. Observe, The design of the Christian religion was to promote prayer; and the disciples of Christ must be praying people: *Pray always with all prayer*, Ephes. vi. 18. Prayers for ourselves in the first place, that is implied here; we must also pray *for all men*; for the world of mankind in general, for particular persons that need or desire our prayers. See how far the Christian religion was from being a sect when it taught men this diffusive charity; to pray, not only for those of their own way, but for all men. *Pray for kings*, ver. 2. though the kings at this time were heathens, enemies to Christianity, and persecutors of Christians, yet they must pray for them, because it is for the publick good that there should be civil government, and proper persons entrusted with the administration of it, whom therefore we ought to pray for, yea, though we ourselves suffer under them. For kings,

and *all that are in authority*, i. e. inferior magistrates: we must pray for them, and we must give thanks for them, pray for their welfare, and for the welfare of their kingdoms, and therefore must not plot against them, that in the peace thereof we may have peace and give thanks for them, and for the benefit we have under their government. That *we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty*. Here see what we must desire for kings, that God will so turn their hearts and direct them, and make use of them, that we under them *may lead a quiet and peaceable life*. He doth not say, that we may get preferments under them, grow rich, and be in honour and power under them; no, the top of the ambition of a good Christian is to lead a *quiet and peaceable life*, to get through the world unmolested in a low private station. We should desire that we and others may lead a peaceable life *in all godliness and honesty*; implying, that we cannot expect to be kept quiet and peaceable, unless we keep *in all godliness and honesty*. Let us mind our duty, and then we may expect to be taken under the protection both of God and the government. *In all godliness and honesty*: Here we have our duty as Christians summed up in two words, godliness, that is, the right worshipping of God; and honesty, that is a good carriage towards all men. These two must go together; we are not truly honest if we be not godly, and do not render to God his due; and we are not truly godly except we be honest, for God *hates robbery for burnt-offering*.

Here we observe, 1. Christians are to be men much given to prayer, they ought to abound herein, and should use themselves to prayers, supplications, &c. 2. In our prayers we are to have a generous concern for others as well as for ourselves, we are to pray for all men, and to give thanks for all men; and must not confine our prayers or thanksgivings to our own persons or families. 3. Prayer consists of various parts of supplications, intercessions and thanksgivings, for we must pray for the mercies we want, as well as be thankful for mercies already received, and we are to deprecate the judgments our own or others sins have deserved. 4. All men, yea, kings themselves, and those that are in authority, are to be prayed for, they want our prayers, for they have many difficulties to encounter, many snares to which their exalted stations expose them. 5. In praying for our governors, we take the most likely course to lead a peaceable and quiet life: The Jews at Babylon were commanded to seek the peace of the city, whither the Lord had caused them to be carried captives, and to pray unto the Lord for it; for in the peace thereof they should have peace, Jer. xxix. 7. 6. If we would lead a peaceable and quiet life, we must live in all godliness and honesty; we must do our duty to God and man; *He that will love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile, let him eschew evil and do good, let him seek peace and ensue it*, 1 Pet. iii. 10, 11.

Now the reason he gives for this is, *because this is good in the sight of God our Saviour*; i. e. the gospel of Christ requires this. That which is acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, we should do and should abound in.

(2.) As a reason why we should in our prayers concern ourselves for all men, he shews God's love to mankind in general, ver. 4.

1. One reason why all men are to be prayed for, is, because there is one God, and that God bears a good will to all mankind. There is *one God*, ver. 5. and one only, there is no other, there can be no other, for there can be but one infinite. This one God *will have all men to be saved*, i. e. he desires not the death and destruction of any, Ezek. xxxiii. 11. but the welfare and salvation of all. Not that he hath decreed the salvation of all, for then all men would be saved; but he hath a good will to the salvation of all, and none perish, but it is their own fault; *Matth. xxiii. 37*. He will have all to be saved *and to come to the knowledge of the truth*, i. e. to be saved in the way that he hath appointed, and not otherwise. It concerns us to get the knowledge of the truth, because that is the way to be saved; *Christ is the way and the truth, and so he is the life*.

2. There is one mediator, and that mediator gave himself a ransom for all: As the mercy of God extends itself to all his works, so the mediation of Christ extends itself thus far to all the children of men, that he paid a price sufficient for the salvation of all mankind: he brought mankind to stand upon new terms with God, so as that they are not now under the law as a covenant of works, but as a rule of life, but under grace; not under the covenant of innocence, but under a new covenant, *he gave himself a ransom*. Observe, That the death of Christ was a ransom, a counter-price; we deserved to have died; Christ died for us to save us from death and hell: he gave himself a ransom voluntarily, a ransom for all; so that all mankind are put in a better condition than that of devils. He died to work out a common salvation; in order hereunto, he put himself into the office of mediator between God and man. A mediator supposes a controversy. Sin had made a quarrel between us and God; Jesus Christ is a mediator that undertakes to make peace, to bring God and man together, in the nature of an umpire or arbitrator, a days-man that lays his hand upon us both, *Job ix. 33*. He is a ransom that *was to be testified*

fed in due time, i. e. in the Old Testament-times, his sufferings and the glory that should follow, were spoken of as things to be revealed in the last times, 1 *Pet.* i. 10, 11. And they are accordingly revealed, by the same token that Paul himself was *ordained a preacher and an apostle*, to publish to the Gentiles the glad tidings of redemption and salvation by Jesus Christ. This doctrine of Christ's mediation Paul was entrusted to preach to every creature, *Mark* xv. 16. He was appointed to be a teacher of the Gentiles; besides his general call to the apostleship, he was commissioned particularly to preach to the Gentiles, *in faith and truth*, i. e. faithfully and truly.

Note, 1. It is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, that we pray for kings and for all men, and also, that we lead a peaceable and quiet life, &c. and this is a very good reason why we should do the one as well as the other. 2. God hath a good will to the salvation of all; so that, it is not so much the want of a will in God to save them, as it is a want of will in themselves to be saved in God's way. Here our blessed Lord charges the fault; ye will not come unto me that ye may have life, *John* v. 40. I would have gathered you, and ye would not. 3. Those that are saved must come to the knowledge of the truth, for that is God's appointed way to save sinners; without knowledge the heart cannot be good, if we do not know the truth we cannot be ruled by it. 4. It is observable that the unity of God is asserted and joined with the unity of the mediator, and the church of Rome might as well maintain a plurality of gods, as a plurality of mediators. 5. He that is a mediator in the New Testament sense, gave himself a ransom. Vain then is the pretence of the Romaniſts, that there is but one mediator of satisfaction, but many of intercession, for, according to St. Paul, Christ giving himself a ransom was a necessary part of the Mediator's office; and indeed this lays the foundation for his intercession. 6. St. Paul was ordained a minister to declare this to the Gentiles, that Christ is the one mediator between God and men, who gave himself a ransom for all: This is the substance of which all ministers are to preach to the end of the world; and St. Paul magnified his office, as he was the apostle of the Gentiles, *Rom.* xi. 13. Lastly, Ministers must preach the truth, what they apprehend to be so, and they must believe it themselves; they are like our apostle, to preach in faith and verity, and they must also be faithful and trusty.

3. A direction how to pray, *ver.* 8.

1. Now under the gospel, prayer is not to be confined to any one particular house of prayer, but men must pray every where: no place amiss for prayer, no one place more acceptable to God than another, *John* iv. 21. *Pray every where*, i. e. we must pray in our closets, and pray in our families, pray at our meals, pray when we are in journies, pray in the solemn assemblies, whether more publick or more private.

2. It is the will of God, that in prayer we should lift up holy hands: *lifting up holy hands*, or pure hands, pure from the pollution of sin, washed in the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness, I will wash my hands, &c. *Pſal.* xxvi. 7.

3. We must pray in charity; *without wrath*, or malice, or anger at any person.

4. We must pray in faith, *without doubting*, *Jam.* i. 6. or, as some read it, *without disputing*; and then it falls under the head of charity.

9. In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety: not with broidered hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; 10. But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works. 11. Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. 12. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. 13. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. 14. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, was in the transgression. 15. Notwithstanding, she shall be saved in child-bearing, if they continue in faith, and charity, and holiness with sobriety.

Here is a charge, that women that profess the Christian religion should be modest, and sober, and silent, and submissive, as becomes their place.

1. They must be very modest in their apparel, not affecting gaudiness or gaiety, or costliness; you may read the vanity of a person's mind by the gaiety and gaudiness of their habit, because they have better ornaments with which they should adorn themselves as becomes women professing godliness, with good works. Note, Good works are the best ornament, these are in the sight of God of great price. *Those that profess godliness should, in their drefs, as well as other things, carry it as becomes their profession*; instead of laying out their money on fine clothes, they must lay it out in works of piety and charity, which are properly called good works.

2. Women must learn, learn the principles of their religion, learn Christ, learn the scriptures, they must not think that their sex excuses them from that learning which is necessary to salvation.

3. They must be *silent* and submissive, and subject, and *not usurp authority*: And the reason given is, because *Adam was first formed, then Eve* out of him, to denote her subordination to him, and dependence upon him; and that she was made from him to be a *help-meet* for him. And as she was last in the creation, which is one reason for her subjection; so she was first in the transgression, and that is another reason. *Adam was not deceived*, i. e. not first; the serpent did not immediately set upon him, but the woman was first in the transgression, 2 *Cor.* xi. 3. and it was part of the sentence, thy desire shall be to thine husband, and he shall rule over thee, *Gen.* iii. 16.

But it is a word of comfort, *ver.* 15. that they that continue in sobriety shall be *saved in child-bearing*, or, *with child-bearing*: The Messiah, who was born of a woman, should break the serpent's head, *Gen.* iii. 15. or, the sentence which they are under for sin, shall be no bar to their acceptance with Christ, *if they continue in faith, and charity, and holiness, with sobriety*.

Here we observe, 1. The extensiveness of the rules of Christianity; they not only reach to men, but women, not only to their persons, but also to their drefs, which must be modest like their sex, and to their outward deportment and behaviour, it must be in silence, with all subjection. 2. Women are to profess godliness as well as men, for they are baptized, and thereby stand engaged to exercise themselves to godliness; and, to their honour be it spoken, many of them were eminent professors of Christianity in the days of the apostles, as the book of Acts will inform us. 3. Women being more in danger to exceed in their apparel, it was more necessary to caution them in this respect. 4. The best ornaments for professors of godliness are good works. 5. According to St. Paul, women must be learners, and are not allowed to be publick teachers in the church, for teaching is an office of authority; whereas she must not usurp authority over the man, but is to be in silence: But notwithstanding this prohibition, good women may and ought to teach their children at home the principles of religion. Timothy, from a child, had known the holy scriptures, and who should teach him but his mother and grandmother, 2 *Tim.* iii. 15. Aquila and his wife Priscilla expounded unto Apollos the way of God more perfectly, but then they did it privately, for they took him unto them, *Acts* xviii. 26. 6. Here are two very good reasons given for the man's authority over the woman, and her subjection to the man, *ver.* 13, 14. Adam was first formed, then Eve; she was created for the man, and not the man for the woman, 1 *Cor.* xi. 9. then she was deceived, and brought the man into the transgression. Lastly, Though the difficulties and dangers of child-bearing are many and great, as they are part of the punishment inflicted on the sex for Eve's transgression, yet here is much for her support and encouragement, *notwithstanding she shall be saved*, &c. Though in sorrow, yet she shall bring forth, and be a living mother of living children; with this proviso, that they continue in faith, and charity, and holiness, with sobriety: and women under the circumstance of child-bearing should, by faith, lay hold on this promise for their support in the needful time.

C H A P. III.

In this chapter our apostle treats of church officers. And, 1. He gives us the qualifications of a person to be admitted to the office of a bishop, ver. 1—8. 2. Of the qualifications of deacons, ver. 8, 9, 10. And of their wives, ver. 11. And again of the deacons, ver. 12, 13. 3. Of the reasons of his writing to Timothy, whereupon he speaks of the church and the foundation truth professed therein, ver. 14. ad fin.

1. **T**HIS is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. 2. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; 3. Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre, but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; 4. One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; 5. (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) 6. Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil. 7. Moreover, he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach, and the snare of the devil.

The two epistles to Timothy, and that to Titus, contain a scripture-plan of church-government, or a direction to ministers. Timothy, we suppose, was an evangelist that was left at Ephesus, to take care of those whom the Holy Ghost had made bishops there, i. e. the presbyters, as appears by *Acts* xx. 28, where the

care of the church was committed to the presbyters, and they were called bishops. It seems they were very loth to part with Paul, especially because he told them, they should *see his face no more*, Acts xx. 38. for their church was but newly planted, they were afraid of undertaking the care of it, and therefore Paul left Timothy with them to set them in order.

And here we have the characters of a gospel-minister, whose office it is, as a bishop, to preside in a particular congregation of Christians. *If a man desires the office of a bishop, he desires a good work*, ver. 1. The ministry is a *work*. However the office of a bishop may be now thought a good preferment, then it was thought a good work.

Observe, 1. The office of a scripture-bishop is an office of divine appointment, and not of human invention; the ministry is not a creature of the state, and it is pity that the minister should be at any time the tool of the state. The office of the ministry was in the church, before the magistrate countenanced Christianity, for this office is one of the great gifts Christ hath bestowed on the church, *Eph. iv. 8, 11*. 2. This office of a Christian bishop is a work which requires diligence and application: The apostle represents it under the notion and character of a work, not of great honour and advantage, for ministers should always look more to their work, than to the honour and advantage of their office. 3. It is a good work, a work of the greatest importance, and designed for the greatest good: The ministry is conversant about no lower concerns than the life and happiness of immortal souls; it is a good work, because designed to illustrate the divine perfections, in bringing many sons into glory; the ministry is appointed to open mens eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, *Eccl. xxi. 18*. 4. There ought to be an earnest desire of the office in those who would be put into it; if a man desires, he should earnestly desire it, for the prospect he hath of bringing greater glory to God, and of doing the greatest good to the souls of men by this means. This is the question proposed to those who offer themselves to the ministry of the church of England; do you think you are moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon you this office?

And in order to the discharge of this office, the doing of this work, the workman must be duly qualified,

1. A minister must be *blameless*; i. e. not lie under any scandal; he must give as little occasion for blame as can be, because that will be a prejudice to his ministry, and will reflect reproach upon his office.

2. He must be *the husband of one wife*. Not having given a bill of divorce to one, and then taking another, or not having many wives at once, as at that time was too common both among Jews and Gentiles, especially among the Gentiles.

3. He must be *vigilant*, and watchful against Satan, that subtle enemy; he must watch over himself and the souls of those that are committed to his charge, of whom having taken the *oversight*, he must improve all opportunities of doing them good. A minister ought to be vigilant, because our adversary the devil goes about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour, *1 Pet. v. 8*.

4. He must be *sober*; i. e. temperate, moderate in all his actions, and in the use of all creature-comforts. Sobriety and watchfulness are often in scripture put together, because they mutually befriend one another, be sober, vigilant.

5. He must be of *good behaviour*, composed and solid, and not light and vain and frothy.

6. He must be *given to hospitality*; open-handed to strangers, and ready to entertain them according to his ability, as one that doth not set his heart upon the wealth of the world, and that is a true lover of his brethren.

7. *Apt to teach*. Therefore this is a preaching bishop that Paul describes, one that is both able and willing to communicate to others the knowledge which God hath given him; one that is fit to teach, and ready to take all opportunities of giving instruction; that is himself *well instructed in the things of the kingdom of heaven*, and is communicative of what he knows to others.

8. No drunkard, *not given to wine*. The priests were not to drink wine when they went in to minister, *Lev. x. 8, 9*. *lest they drink and pervert the law*.

9. *No striker*; i. e. one that is not quarrelsome, nor apt to use violence to any, but doth every thing with mildness, love, and gentleness: The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle towards all, *Eccl. 2 Tim. ii. 24*.

10. One that is *not greedy of filthy lucre*; i. e. that doth not make his ministry to truckle to any secular design or interest; that useth no mean, base, sordid ways of getting money; that is dead to the wealth of this world, and lives above it, and makes it appear he is so.

11. He must be *patient*, and *not a brawler*, of a mild disposition. Christ, the great shepherd and bishop of souls, is so. Not apt to be angry or quarrelsome, as not a striker with his hands, so not a brawler with his tongue; for how shall men teach others to govern their tongues, who do not make conscience of keeping them under good government themselves?

12. *Not covetous*. Covetousness is bad in any, but it is worst in a minister, whose calling leads him to converse so much with another world.

13. He must be one that keeps his family in good order; *that rules well his own house*, that he may set a good example to other masters of families to do so too; and that he may thereby give a proof of his ability to take care of the church of God; *For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God*. Observe, The families of ministers ought to be examples of good to all other families. Ministers must have their children in subjection; then it is the duty of ministers children to submit to the instructions that are given them. *With all gravity*. Observe, That the best way to keep inferiors in subjection, is to be grave with them. Not having his children in subjection with all *austerity*, but with all *gravity*.

14. He must *not be a novice*; i. e. not one newly brought to the Christian religion; or, not one that is but meanly instructed in it, that knows no more of religion than the surface of it, for such a one is apt to be *lifted up with pride*; the more ignorant men are, the more proud they are. *Lest being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil*. The devils fell through pride, which is a good reason why we should take heed of pride, because it is a sin that turned angels into devils.

15. He must be of good reputation among his neighbours, and under no reproach from former conversation; for the devil will make use of that to ensnare others, and work in them an aversion to the doctrine of Christ, preached by those that have not had a good report.

Now upon the whole, having briefly gone through the qualifications of the gospel-bishop, we may (1.) With great reason cry out as St. Paul doth, *Who is sufficient for these things?* 2 Cor. ii. 16. *Hic labor, hoc opus: This is a work indeed*. What piety, what prudence, what zeal, what courage, what faithfulness, what watchfulness, over ourselves, our lusts, appetites, and passions, and over those under our charge; I say, what holy watchfulness is necessary in this work? (2.) Have not the best qualified, and the most faithful and conscientious ministers just reason to complain against themselves, that so much is requisite by way of qualification, and so much work is necessary to be done? And alas! How far short do the best come of what they should be, and what they should do! (3.) Yet let those bless God and be thankful, whom the Lord hath enabled, and counted faithful, putting them into the ministry; if God is pleased to make any, in some degree, able and faithful, let him have the praise and glory of it. (4.) For the encouragement of all faithful ministers, we have Christ's gracious word of promise, *Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world*, Matt. xxviii. 20. And if he be with us, he will fit us for our work in some measure, and carry us through the difficulties of it with comfort, and graciously pardon our imperfections, and reward our faithfulness with a crown of glory that fadeth not away, *1 Pet. v. 4*.

8. Likewise *must* the deacons be grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre, 9. Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. 10. And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being *found* blameless. 11. Even so *must* their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. 12. Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children, and their own houses well. 13. For they that have used the office of a deacon well, purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

1. We have here the character of deacons: Those had the care of the temporal concerns of the church, that is, the maintenance of the ministers, and provision of the poor: They served tables, while the ministers or bishops gave themselves only to the ministry of the word and prayer, *Acts vi. 2, 4*. Of the institution of this office with that which gave occasion to it, you have an account in *Acts vi. 1—7*. Now it was requisite the deacons should have a good character, because they were assistants to the ministers, appeared and acted publickly, and had a great trust reposed in them. They must be *grave*; gravity becomes all Christians, but especially those that are in office in the church. *Not double-tongued*; that will say one thing to one, and another thing to another, according as their interest leads them; a double tongue comes from a double heart, flatterers, slanderers are double-tongued. *Not given to much wine*; for that is a great disparagement to any man, especially to a Christian, and one in office, disfits men for business, opens the door to many temptations. *Not greedy of filthy lucre*: This would especially be bad in the deacons that were intrusted with the church's money; and if they were covetous and greedy of filthy lucre, would be tempted to embezzle it, and convert that to their own use, which was intended for the publick service. *Holding the mystery of faith in a pure conscience*, ver. 9. Note, The mystery of faith is best held in

in a pure conscience. The practical love of truth is the most powerful preservative from error and delusion. If we keep a pure conscience, *i. e.* take heed of every thing that debauches conscience, and draws us away from God, that will preserve in our souls the mystery of faith. *Let these also first be proved, ver. 10.* It is not fit the publick trusts should be lodged in the hands of any, till they are first proved, and found fit for the business they are to be entrusted with; the soundness of their judgments, their zeal for Christ, and the blamelessness of their conversation must be proved.

2. Their wives likewise must have a good character, *ver. 11.* they must be of a *grave* behaviour, *not slanderers*, tale-bearers, carrying stories to make mischief and sow discord; they must be *seber and faithful in all things*, not given to any excess, but *trusty* in all that is committed to them. All that are related to ministers must double their care to walk as becomes the gospel of Christ, lest if they in any thing walk disorderly the ministry be blamed. As he said before of the bishops or ministers, so here of the deacons, they must be *the husband of one wife*, such as had not put away their wives upon dislike and married others; they must *rule their children and their own houses well*; families of ministers should be examples to other families. And the reason why the deacons must be thus qualified is, *ver. 13.* because though the office of a deacon be an inferior degree, yet it is a step towards the higher degree; and they that had served tables well, the church might see cause afterwards to discharge them from that service, and prefer them to serve in preaching the word, and in prayer. Or it may be meant of the good reputation that a man would gain by his fidelity in this office; *They will purchase to themselves great boldness in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.*

Observe, 1. In the primitive church there were but two orders of ministers or officers, bishops and deacons, *Philip. i. 1.* Afterwards have invented the rest. The office of the bishop, presbyter, pastor or minister, was confined to prayer and to the ministry of the word; and the office of the deacon was confined to, or at least principally conversant about serving tables. Clemens Romanus, in his epistle to the Christians, *cap. 42, 44.* speaks very fully and plainly to this purpose, that the apostles foreknowing, by our Lord Jesus Christ, there would arise in the Christian church a controversy about the name Episcopacy, appointed the forementioned orders, bishops and deacons. 2. The scripture-deacon's main employment was, to serve tables, and not to preach or baptize. It is true indeed, Philip did preach and baptize many in Samaria, *Acts viii.* but you read he was an evangelist, *Acts xxi. 8.* and he might preach and baptize, and perform any other part of the ministerial office under that character: But still the design of the deacon's office was, to mind the temporal concerns of the church, such as the salaries of the ministers, and providing for the poor. 3. Several qualifications were very necessary, even for these inferior officers, *The deacons must be grave, &c.* 4. Some trial should be made of persons qualifications before they are admitted into office in the church, or have any trust committed to them, *Let these also first be proved.* 5. Integrity and uprightness in an inferior office, is the way to be preferred to an higher station in the church, *They purchase to themselves a good degree.* 6. This will also give a man great boldness in the faith, whereas a want of integrity and uprightness, will make a man timorous and ready to tremble at his own shadow, *The wicked flee when no man pursueth, but the righteous are bold as a lion,* Prov. xxviii. 1.

14. These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: 15. But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thy self in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. 16. And without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

He concludes the chapter with a particular direction to Timothy.

1. He hoped shortly to come to him to give him further directions and assistance in his work, and to see that Christianity was well planted, and took root well, at Ephesus; he therefore wrote the more briefly to him. But,

2. He wrote *lest he should tarry long, that he might know how to behave himself in the house of God, i. e.* how to carry himself as became an evangelist and a substitute of the apostle's. Observe, Those that are employed in the house of God must see to it, that they behave themselves well, lest they bring reproach upon the house of God, and that worthy name by which they are called. Ministers ought to behave themselves well, and to look not only to their praying and preaching, but to their behaviour: Their office binds them to their good behaviour, for any behaviour will not do in this case. Timothy must know how to behave himself, not only in that particular church where he was now appointed to reside for some time, but being an evangelist

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and substitute of the apostle's, he must learn how to behave himself in other churches, where he should in like manner be appointed to reside for some time; and therefore it is not the church of Ephesus, but the catholick church, which is here called, *the house of God, which is the church of the living God.*

Observe here, 1. God is the living God, he is the fountain of life, he is life in himself, and he gives life, breath and all things to his creatures, in him we live, and move, and have our being, *Acts xvii. 25, 28.* 2. The church is the house of God, he dwells there, the Lord hath chosen Zion to dwell there; this is my rest, here will I dwell, for I have chosen it, there may we see God's power and glory, *Psal. lxxiii. 2.*

It is the great support of the church, that it is the church of the living God, the true God in opposition to false gods, dumb and dead idols. *The pillar and ground of truth*; that is either,

1. The church itself, that is the pillar and ground of truth. Not that the authority of the scriptures depends upon that of the church, as the Papists pretend, for truth is the pillar and ground of the church; but the church holds forth the scripture and the doctrine of Christ, as the pillar to which a proclamation is affixed; holds forth the proclamation; *Even to the principalities and powers in heavenly places, is made known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,* Eph. iii. 10.

2. Others understand it of Timothy. He, not he himself only, but he as an evangelist; he and other faithful ministers are the pillars and ground of truth; *i. e.* It is their business to maintain, hold up and publish the truths of Christ in the church. It is said of the apostles, that *they seemed to be pillars,* Gal. ii. 9.

(1.) Let us be diligent and impartial in our own enquiries after truth, let us buy the truth at any rate, and not think much of any pains to discover it. (2.) Let us be careful to keep and preserve it; *Buy the truth and sell it not,* Prov. xxiii. 23. do not part with it on any consideration. (3.) Let us take care to publish it, and to transmit it safe and uncorrupted unto posterity. (4.) When the church ceases to be the pillar and ground of truth, we may and ought to forsake her; for our regard to truth should be greater than our regard to the church; we are no longer obliged to continue in the church, than she continues to be the pillar and ground of truth.

Now what is the truth which the churches and ministers are the pillars and grounds of? He tells us, *ver. 16.* That *without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness.* The learned Camero joins this with what goes before, and then it runs thus, The pillar and ground of the truth, and without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: He supposes this mystery to be the pillar, &c.

Observe, 1. That Christianity is a mystery, a mystery that could not have been found out by reason or the light of nature, and cannot be comprehended by reason, because it is above reason, though not contrary thereto: It is a mystery, not of philosophy or speculation, but, 2. It is a mystery of godliness, designed to promote godliness; and herein it exceeds all the mysteries of the Gentiles. 3. It is a revealed mystery, not shut up and sealed, and it doth not cease to be a mystery, because now in part revealed.

Now what is the mystery of godliness? It is Christ; and here are six things concerning Christ, which make up the mystery of godliness.

1. That he is God manifest in the flesh. *God was manifest in the flesh.* This proves that he is God the eternal Word that was made flesh, and was manifest in the flesh. When God was to be manifested to man, he was pleased to manifest himself in the incarnation of his own Son; *The Word was made flesh,* John i. 14.

2. He is justified in the Spirit; *i. e.* Whereas he was reproached as a sinner, and put to death as a malefactor, he was raised again by the Spirit, and so was justified from all calumnies, with which he was loaded. *He was made sin for us, and was delivered for our offences*; but being raised again, he was justified in the Spirit; *i. e.* it was made to appear that his sacrifice was accepted, and so *he rose again for our justification*, as he was delivered for our offences, Rom. iv. 25. He was put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit, 1 Pet. iii. 18.

3. He was seen of angels. They worshipped him, *Heb. i. 6.* they attended his incarnation, his temptation, his agony, his death, his resurrection, his ascension; this is much to his honour, and shews what a mighty interest he hath in the upper world, that angels ministered to him, for he is the Lord of angels.

4. He is preached unto the Gentiles. This is a great part of the mystery of godliness, that Christ was offered to the Gentiles a Redeemer and Saviour; that whereas before, salvation was of the Jews, the partition-wall was now taken down, and the Gentiles were taken in; *I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles,* Acts xiii. 47.

5. That he was believed on in the world, so that he was not preached in vain. Many of the Gentiles welcomed the gospel which the Jews rejected. Who would have thought that the world that lay in wickedness should have believed in the Son of God? should take him to be their Saviour who was himself crucified

crucified at Jerusalem: But notwithstanding all the prejudices they laboured under, he was believed on, &c.

6. He was *received up into glory*: In his ascension. This indeed was before he was believed on in the world; but it is put last, because it was the crown of his exaltation, and because it is not only his ascension that is meant, but his sitting at the right-hand of God, where *he ever lives making intercession*, and hath all power, both in heaven and earth: And because in the apostasy, of which he treats in the following chapter, his remaining in heaven would be denied by those who pretend to bring him down on their altars in the consecrated wafers.

Observe, 1. He who was manifest in flesh was God, really and truly God; God by nature, and not only so by office, for this makes it to be a mystery. 2. God was manifest in flesh, real flesh, so far as children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, *Heb. ii. 14*. And what is more amazing, he was manifest in the flesh, after all flesh had corrupted his way, though he himself was holy from the womb. 3. Godliness is a mystery in all its parts and branches, from the beginning to the end, from Christ's incarnation to his ascension. 4. It being a great mystery, we should rather humbly adore it, and piously believe it, than curiously pry into it, or be too positive in our explications of it, and determinations about it, further than the holy scriptures have revealed it to us.

C H A P. IV.

St. Paul here foretels, 1. A dreadful apostasy, ver. 1, 2, 3. 2. He treats of Christian liberty, ver. 4, 5. 3. He gives Timothy divers directions which respect himself, his doctrine, and the people under his care, ver. 6, ad fin.

1. **N**OW the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; 2. Speaking lyes in hypocrisy, having their consciences seared with a hot iron; 3. Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. 4. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: 5. For it is sanctified by the word of God, and prayer.

We have here a prophecy of the apostasy of the latter times, which he had spoken of as a thing expected and taken for granted among Christians, *2 Thess. ii*. In the close of the foregoing chapter we had the mystery of godliness summed up, and therefore very fitly in the beginning of this chapter we have the mystery of iniquity summed up. *The Spirit speaks expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith*; whether he means the Spirit in the Old Testament, or the Spirit in the prophets of the New Testament, or both. The prophecies concerning anti-christ, as well as the prophecies concerning Christ, come from the Spirit. The Spirit in both spake expressly of a general apostasy from the faith of Christ, and the pure worship of God: This should come in the *latter times*, i. e. during the Christian dispensation, for those are called the latter days; in the following ages of the church, for the mystery of iniquity now began to work. *Some shall depart from the faith*, or there shall be an apostasy from the faith. *Some*, not all; for in the worst of times *God will have a remnant, according to the election of grace: They shall depart from faith*, the faith delivered to the saints, *Jude 3*. and it was delivered at once, i. e. the sound doctrine of the gospel. *Giving heed to seducing spirits*; i. e. Men that pretended to the Spirit, but were not really guided by the Spirit, *1 John iv. 1. Beloved, believe not every spirit*; i. e. every one that pretends to the Spirit. Now here observe,

1. One of the great instances of that apostasy, and that is giving heed to doctrines of demons, or concerning demons; i. e. Those doctrines which teach the worship of saints and angels, as a middle sort of deities, between the immortal God and mortal men, such as the heathen called demons, and worshipped under that notion. Now this plainly agrees to the church of Rome, and it was one of the first steps towards that great apostasy, the inslaving of the relicks of martyrs, paying divine honours to them, erecting altars, burning incense, consecrating images and temples, and making prayers and praises to the honour of saints departed. This demon worship is paganism revived, the image of the first beast.

2. The instruments of promoting and propagating this apostasy and delusion. It will be done by *hypocrisy* of those that *speak lyes*, ver. 2. *speaking lyes in hypocrisy*; i. e. the agents and emissaries of Satan, that promote these delusions by lyes and forgeries, and pretended miracles. It is done by their hypocrisy, professing honour to Christ, and yet at the same time fighting against all his

anointed offices, and corrupting or profaning all his ordinances. The hypocrisy likewise of those that have *their consciences seared with a red hot iron*; i. e. that are perfectly lost to the very first principles of virtue and moral honesty. If men had not their consciences seared as with a hot iron, they could never maintain a power to dispense with oaths for the good of the catholic cause, could never maintain that no faith is to be kept with hereticks, could never divest themselves of all remains of humanity and compassion, and clothe themselves with the most barbarous cruelty, under pretence of promoting the interest of the church.

Another part of their character is, that they *forbid to marry*, forbid their clergy to marry, and speak very reproachfully of marriage, though an ordinance of God; and that they command *to abstain from meats*, and place religion in that at certain times and seasons, only to exercise a tyranny over the consciences of men.

(1.) The apostasy of the latter times should not surprize us, because it was expressly foretold by the Spirit. (2.) The Spirit is God, otherwise he could not certainly foresee such distant events, which as to us are uncertain and contingent, depending on the tempers, humours, and lusts of men. (3.) The difference between the predictions of the Spirit, and the oracles of the heathen, the Spirit speaketh expressly, but the oracles of the heathen were always doubtful and uncertain. (4.) It is comfortable to think that in such general apostasies, all are not carried away, but only some. (5.) It is common for seducers and deceivers to pretend to the Spirit, which is a strong presumption, that all are convinced, that this is the most likely to work in us an approbation of what pretends to come from the Spirit. (6.) Men must be hardened and their consciences seared before they can depart from the faith, and draw in others to side with them. (7.) It is a sign men have departed from the faith, when they will command what God hath forbidden, such as faint, and angel, or demon-worship, and forbid what God hath allowed or commanded, such as marriage, and meats.

Upon occasion of the mentioning of their hypocritical fastings, the apostle lays down the doctrine of the Christian liberty which we enjoy under the gospel, of using God's good creatures. That whereas under the law, there was a distinction of meats between clean and unclean, such sort of flesh they might eat, and such they might not eat, all that is now taken away; and we are to *call nothing common or unclean*, *Acts x. 15*.

1. We are to look upon our food as that which *God hath created*; we have it from him, and therefore must use it for him.

2. God, in making those things, had a special regard to *them which believe and know the truth*; i. e. good Christians which have a covenant-right to the creatures; whereas others have only a common right.

3. What God hath created is to be *received with thanksgiving*. We must not refuse the gifts of God's bounty, nor be scrupulous in making differences where God hath made none; but take it and be thankful, acknowledging the power of God the maker of them, and the bounty of God the giver of them.

Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, ver. 4. This plainly sets us at liberty from all the distinctions of meats appointed by the ceremonial law, as particularly that of swines flesh, which the Jews were forbidden to eat; but is allowed to us Christians by this rule, *Every creature of God is good*, &c. Observe, That God's good creatures are then good, and doubly sweet to us when they are received with thanksgiving.

For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer, ver. 5. It is a desirable thing to have a sanctified use of our creature-comforts: Now they are sanctified to us,

1. By the word of God; not only his permission, allowing us the liberty of the use of these things, but his promise to feed us *with food convenient for us*. This gives us a sanctified use of our creature-comforts.

2. By prayer, which blesses our meat to us. The word of God and prayer must be brought to our common actions and affairs, and then we do all in faith.

Observe, 1. Every creature is God's, for he made them. *Every beast in the forest is mine*, (says God) *and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains, and the wild beasts of the field are mine*, *Psal. 110, 11*. 2. Every creature of God is good: when the blessed God took a survey of all his works, God saw all that was made, and behold it was very good, *Gen. i. 31*. 3. The blessing of God makes every creature nourishing to us; man lives not by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God, *Matt. iv. 4*. and therefore nothing ought to be refused. 4. We ought therefore to ask his blessing by prayer, and so to sanctify the creatures we receive by prayer.

6. If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith, and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained. 7. But refuse

refuse profane and old wives fables, and exercise thy self *rather* unto godliness. 8. For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. 9. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance. 10. For therefore we both labour, and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, especially of those that believe. 11. These things command and teach. 12. Let no man despise thy youth, but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. 13. Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. 14. Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of hands of the presbytery. 15. Meditate upon these things, give thy self wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear to all. 16. Take heed unto thy self, and unto thy doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this, thou shalt both save thy self, and them that hear thee.

If thou put the brethren in remembrance, &c. He would have Timothy to instil such notions as these into the minds of Christians, which might prevent their being seduced by the Judaizing teachers. Observe, Those are good ministers of Jesus Christ that are diligent in their work; not that study to advance new notions, but that *put the brethren in remembrance of those things that they have received and heard.* *Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though you know them,* 2 Pet. i. 12. And elsewhere, *I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance,* 2 Pet. iii. 1. And says the apostle Jude, *I will therefore put you in remembrance,* Jude 5. You see the apostles and apostolical men reckoned it a main part of their work, to put their hearers in remembrance, for we are apt to forget, and slow to learn and remember the things of God.

Nourished up in the words of faith and good doctrine, wherunto thou hast attained. Observe, 1. That even ministers themselves have need to be growing and increasing in the knowledge of Christ, and his doctrine: They must be nourished up in the words of faith. 2. Observe, The best way for ministers to grow in knowledge and faith, is to put the brethren in remembrance; while we teach others we teach ourselves. 3. They whom ministers teach are brethren, and are to be treated like brethren; for ministers are not lords of God's heritage.

1. Godliness is here pressed upon him and others. *Refuse profane and old wives sayings,* ver. 7, 8. The Jewish traditions which some people fill their heads with, have nothing to do with them. *But exercise thy self rather unto godliness;* i. e. mind practical religion. Those that would be godly, must exercise themselves unto godliness, it requires a constant exercise: The reason is taken from the gain of godliness; *bodily exercise profiteth little,* or for a little time. Abstinence from meats, and marriage, and the like, though they pass for acts of mortification and self-denial, yet they profit little, they turn to little account. What will it avail us to mortify the body, if we do not mortify sin?

Observe, That there is a great deal to be got by godliness; it will be of use to us in the conduct of our whole conversation; *for it hath the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.* Observe, That the gain of godliness lies much in the promise: And the promises made to godly people relate to the *life that now is;* but especially they relate to the *life which is to come.* Under the Old Testament, the promises were mostly of temporal blessings, but under the New Testament of spiritual and eternal blessings. If godly people have but little of the good things of *the life that now is,* yet it shall be made up to them in the good things of the *life that is to come.* Observe further, There were profane and old wives fables in the days of the apostles, and Timothy, though an excellent man, was not above such a word of advice, *refuse profane, &c.* Again, It is not enough that we refuse profane and old wives fables, but we must exercise ourselves to godliness, we must not only cease to do evil, but we must learn to do well, *Isa. i. 16, 17.* and we must make a practice of exercising ourselves to godliness: And, lastly, those that are truly godly shall not be losers at last, whatever becomes of those who content themselves with bodily exercise, for godliness hath the promise, &c.

2. The encouragement which we have to proceed in the ways of godliness, and to exercise ourselves to it, notwithstanding the difficulties and discouragements that we meet with in it. He had said, ver. 8. *That it is profitable for all things, having the promise of the life which now is.* But the question is, whether the profit will balance the loss? for if it will not, it is not profit. Yes, we are sure it will. Here is another of *Paul's faithful sayings, worthy of all acceptance,* that all our labours and losses in the service of God and work of religion, will be abundantly recompensed: So that though we lose for Christ, we shall not lose by

him. *Therefore we labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God.* ver. 10.

Observe, 1. That godly people must labour and expect reproach, they must do well, and yet expect at the same time to suffer ill; toil and trouble is to be expected by us, not only as men, but as saints in this world. 2. Those that labour and suffer reproach in the service of God and the work of religion, may depend upon the living God, that they shall not lose by it. Let this encourage them, *We trust in the living God.* The consideration of this, that that God who hath undertaken to be our pay-master is the living God, who doth himself live for ever, and is the fountain of life to all that serve him, should encourage us in all our services, and in all our sufferings for him especially considering that he is *the Saviour of all men;* i. e.

1. By his providence, he protects the persons, and prolongs the lives of the children of men.

2. He hath a general good will to the eternal salvation of all men thus far, that he is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance: He desires not the death of sinners, he is thus far the Saviour of all men, that none are left in the same desperate condition that fallen angels are in. Now if he be thus the Saviour of all men, we may from hence infer, that much more he will be the rewarder of those that seek and serve him; if he have such a good will for all his creatures, much more will he provide well for those that are new creatures, that are born again. He is the Saviour of all men, but *especially of those that believe;* and the salvation he hath in store for those that believe, is sufficient to recompense them for all their services and sufferings.

Here we see, 1. The life of a Christian is a life of labour and suffering, we labour and suffer. 2. The best we can expect to suffer in the present life is reproach for our well-doing, for our work of faith, and labour of love. 3. True Christians trust in the living God, for cursed is the man that trusteth in man, or in any but the living God; and they that trust in him shall never be ashamed; trust in him at all times. 4. God is the general Saviour of all men, as he hath put them into a salvable state; but he is in a peculiar manner the Saviour of true believers; there is then a general and a special redemption.

3. He concludes the chapter with an exhortation to Timothy.

1. To *command and teach these things,* that he had now been teaching him. Command them to exercise themselves unto godliness, teach them the profit of it, and that if they serve God, they serve one who will be sure to bear them out.

2. He charges him to carry himself with that gravity and prudence as might gain him respect, notwithstanding his youth. *Let no man despise thy youth;* i. e. give no man an occasion to despise thy youth. Mens youth will not be despised, if they do not by youthful vanities and follies make themselves despicable; and that men may do who are old, and may thank themselves if they be despised.

3. He charges him to confirm his doctrine by a good example; *Be thou an example of the believers, &c.* Observe, Those that teach by their doctrine, must teach by their life, else they pull down with one hand, what they build up with the other: They must be examples both *in word and conversation.* Their discourse must be edifying, and that will be a good example: Their conversation must be strict, and that will be a good example: They must be examples *in charity,* or love to God and all good men: examples *in spirit;* i. e. in spiritual-mindedness, in spiritual worship; *in faith,* i. e. in the profession of Christian faith: And *in purity* or chastity.

4. He charges him to study hard. *Till I come give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine, to meditation upon these things,* ver. 13. Though Timothy had extraordinary gifts, yet he must use ordinary means: Or, it may be meant of the publick reading of the scriptures, he must *read and exhort;* i. e. read and expound, read and press what he read upon them; he must exound it both by way of exhortation, and by way of doctrine; i. e. he must teach them both what to do, and what to believe.

Observe, 1. Ministers must teach and command the things that they are taught, and commanded themselves to do; they must teach people to observe all things whatsoever Christ hath commanded, *Matt. xxviii. 20.* 2. The best way for ministers to prevent being despised, is to teach and practise things that are given them in charge. No wonder if ministers are despised, who do not teach these things; or instead of being examples of good to believers, act directly contrary to the doctrines they preach; for ministers who are to be examples of their flock.

3. Those ministers who are the best accomplished for their work must yet mind their studies, that they may be improving in knowledge; and they must mind also their work; they are to give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.

Neglect not the gift that is in thee, ver. 14. The gifts of God will wither if they be neglected: It may be understood either of the office to which he was advanced, or of his qualifications for that office; if of the former, it was ordination in an ordinary way, if of the latter, it was extraordinary. It seems to be the former, for it was by *laying on of hands, &c.* Here see the scripture way

way of ordination, it was by laying on of hands, and laying on the hands of the presbytery. Observe, Timothy was ordained by men in office. It was an extraordinary gift that we read elsewhere was conferred on him, by the laying on of Paul's hands, but he was invested in the office of the ministry by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.

1. We may note the office of the ministry is a gift, it is the gift of Christ, when he ascended up on high he received gifts for men, and he gave some apostles, &c. and some pastors and teachers, *Ephes. iv. 8, 11.* and this was a very kind gift to his church. 2. Ministers ought not to neglect whatever gift is bestowed upon them, whether by gift we are here to understand the office of the ministry, or qualifications for that office, neither the one nor the other must be neglected. 3. Though there was prophecy in the case of Timothy, the gift was given by prophecy, yet this was accompanied with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery, that is a number of presbyters, the office was conveyed to him this way, and I should think here is a sufficient warrant for ordination by presbyters, since it doth not appear St. Paul was concerned in Timothy's ordination: It is true, extraordinary gifts were conferred on him by the laying on of the apostle's hands, *2 Tim. i. 6.* but if he was concerned in his ordination, the presbytery was not excluded, for that is particularly mentioned, from whence it seems pretty evident, that the presbytery have the inherent power of ordination.

Having this work committed to him, he must *give himself wholly* to it, be wholly in those things, *that thy profiting may appear.* He was a wise knowing man, and yet he must still be profiting, and make it appear that he improved in knowledge.

1. Ministers are to be much in meditation, they are to consider beforehand how and what they must speak, they are to meditate on the great trust committed to them, of the worth and value of immortal souls, and of the account they must give at the last. 2. Ministers must be wholly in these things, they must mind these things as their principal work and business, *give thyself wholly to them.* 3. By this means their profiting will appear in all things, as well as to all persons; this is the way for them to profit in knowledge and grace, and also to profit others.

5. He presses it upon him to be very cautious, *take heed to thyself and to the doctrine,* consider what thou preacheest: *continue in them,* i. e. in the truths that thou hast received: And this will be the way to *save thyself and those that hear thee.* Observe, Ministers are engaged in saving work, which makes it a good work. 2. The care of ministers should be in the first place to save themselves; save thyself in the first place, so shalt thou be instrumental to save them that hear thee. Observe, 3. Ministers in preaching should aim at the salvation of those that hear them, next to the salvation of their own souls. 4. The best way to answer both these ends, is to take heed to ourselves &c.

C H A P. V.

Here the apostle directs Timothy, 1. How to reprove, ver. 1, 2. 2. Of widows, both elder and younger, ver. 3—17. 3. Of elders, ver. 17, 18, 19. 4. Of publick reproof, ver. 20. 5. A solemn charge of ordination, ver. 21, 22. 6. Of his health, ver. 23. and of mens sins very different in their effects, ver. 24, 25.

1. **R**EBUKE not an elder, but intreat *him* as a father, and the younger men as brethren; 2. The elder women as mothers, the younger as sisters, with all purity.

Here the apostle gives rules to Timothy, and in him to other ministers in reprovng. Ministers are reprovers by office. Now the rule is,

1. To be very tender in rebuking elders; elders in age, elders by office. Respect must be had to the dignity of their years and place, and therefore they must not be rebuked sharply nor magisterially; but Timothy himself, though an evangelist, must intreat them as fathers, for that would be the likeliest way to work upon them, and to win upon them.

2. The younger must be rebuked as brethren with love and tenderness, not as desirous to spy faults or pick quarrels, but as those that are willing to make the best of them. There is need of a great deal of meekness in reprovng those that deserve reproof.

3. The elder women must be reprovng when there is occasion, they must be reprovng as mothers, *Hos. ii. 2. Plead with your mother, plead.*

4. The younger women must be reprovng, but reprovng as sisters, with all purity. If Timothy, so mortified a man to this world and to the flesh and the lusts of it, had need of such a caution as this, much more have we.

Observe, 1. Ministers are reprovers by office, it is a part, though the least pleasing part of their office, they are to preach the word, &c. to reprove and rebuke, *2 Tim. iv. 2.* 2. A great

difference is to be made in our reproofs according to the age, quality, and other circumstances of the persons rebuked; thus, an elder in age or office must be intreated as a father; *of some have compassion, making a difference,* Jude 22.

3. Honour widows that are widows indeed. 4. But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God. 5. Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day. 6. But she that liveth in pleasure, is dead while she liveth. 7. And these things give in charge, that they may be blameless. 8. But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel. 9. Let not a widow be taken into the number, under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man, 10. Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work. 11. But the younger widows refuse: for when they have begun to wax wanton against Christ, they will marry; 12. Having damnation, because they have cast off their first faith. 13. And withal they learn to be idle, wandring about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also, and busy-bodies, speaking things which they ought not. 14. I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully. 15. For some are already turned aside after Satan. 16. If any man or woman that believeth, have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed.

Directions are here given concerning the taking of widows, into the number of those that were employed by the church, and had maintenance from the church; *Honour widows that are widows indeed.* Honour them, i. e. maintain them, admit them into office. (There was in those times an office in the church in which widows were employed, and that was to tend the sick, the aged, to look to them by the direction of the deacons.) We read of the care taken of widows, immediately upon the first forming of the Christian church, *Acts vi. 1.* where the Grecians thought their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations, and provision that was made for poor widows. The general rule is to *honour widows that are widows indeed,* i. e. to maintain them, relieve them with respect and tenderness.

1. It is appointed that those widows only should be relieved by the charity of the church, that were pious and devout, and not wanton widows that lived in pleasure, ver. 5, 6. She is to be reckoned a widow indeed, and fit to be maintained at the church's charge, that being *desolate, trusteth in God.* Observe, That it is the duty and comfort of those that are desolate to trust in God. Therefore God sometimes brings his people into such straits that they have nothing else to trust to, that they may with more confidence trust in him. Widowhood is a desolate estate, but *let the widows trust in me,* Jer. xlix. 11. and rejoice that they have a God to trust to. Again, They that trust in God must *continue in prayer.* If by faith we confide in God, by prayer we must give glory to God, and commit ourselves to his conduct. Anna was a widow indeed that *departed not from the temple,* Luke ii. 37. *but served God with fasting and prayer night and day:* But she is not a widow indeed that *liveth in pleasure,* ver. 6. or that liveth licentiously. A jovial widow is not a widow indeed, not fit to be taken under the care of the church. *She that lives in pleasure is dead while she lives,* is no living member of the church, but as a carcase in it, or a mortified member. We may apply it more generally, those that live in pleasure are dead while they live, spiritually dead, *dead in trespasses and sins;* they are in the world to no purpose, buried alive as to the great ends of living.

2. Another rule he gives is, that the church should not be charged with the maintenance of those widows that had relations of their own, that were able to maintain them. This is mentioned several times; ver. 4. *If any widow have children or nephews,* i. e. grand-children, or near relations, let them maintain them, and let not the church be burdened. So, ver. 19. this is called *shewing piety at home,* ver. 4. or shewing piety towards their own families. Observe, That the respect of children to their parents, and their care of them, is fitly called piety. This is requiring their parents. Children can never sufficiently requite their parents for the care they have taken of them, and the pains they have

have taken with them, but, however, they must endeavour to do it. It is the indispensable duty of children, if their parents be in necessity, and they are in ability to relieve them, to do it to the utmost of their power, *for that is good and acceptable before God.* The Pharisees taught that a gift to the altar was more acceptable to God than relieving a poor parent, *Matt. xv. 5.* But here we are told that *this is better than all burnt-offerings and sacrifices; this is good and acceptable, &c.* He speaks of this again, *ver. 8. If any provide not for his own, &c. i. e.* If any man or woman do not maintain their own poor relations, that belong to them, they do in effect *deny the faith*; for the design of Christ was to confirm the law of Moses, and particularly the law of the fifth commandment, which is, *Honour thy father and mother*; so that they deny the faith that disobey that law, much more if they provide not for their wives and children, and those that are parts of themselves, if they spend that upon their lusts that should maintain their families, they have denied the faith, *and are worse than infidels.*

One reason why this care must be taken, that those that were rich should maintain their poor relations, and not burden the church with them, is, *ver. 16. that it may relieve them that are widows indeed.* Observe, That charity misplaced, is a great hindrance to true charity; therefore there should be prudence in the choice of the objects of charity, that it may not be thrown away upon those that are not properly so, that there may be the more for those that are real objects of charity.

3. He gives directions concerning the characters of the widows, that were to be taken into the number to receive the church's charity: Not under sixty years old, nor any that have divorced their husbands, or been divorced from them, and have married again, she must have been *the wife of one man*, such as had been a house-keeper, had a good name for hospitality and charity, *well reported of for good works.* Observe, That particular care ought to be taken to relieve those when they fall into decay, who, when they had wherewithal, were ready to every good work.

Here are instances of such good works as are proper to be done by good wives: *If she have brought up children*, he doth not say, if she have born children; *children are an heritage of the Lord*, that depend on the will of God: but if she had not children of her own, yet she brought up children: *If she have lodged strangers*, and *washed the saints feet*; i. e. if she have been ready to give entertainment to good Christians and good ministers, when they were in their travels for the spreading of the gospel; washing of the feet of their friends was a part of their entertainments. *If she have relieved the afflicted* when she had ability, let her be relieved now. Observe that those that would find mercy when they are in distress, must shew mercy when they are in prosperity.

4. He cautions them to take heed of admitting into the number those that are likely to be no credit to them, *ver. 11. The younger widows refuse, &c.* they will be weary of their employments in the church, and of living by rule, as they must do; so they will marry and cast off their first faith, you read of a first love, *Rev. ii. 4.* and here of a first faith, i. e. the engagements they gave to the church to behave themselves well, and as became the trust reposed in them; it does not appear that by their first faith is meant their vow not to marry, for the scripture is very silent on that head; besides, the apostle here adviseth the younger widows to marry, *ver. 14.* which he would not if hereby they must have broken their vows. Dr. Whitby well observes, if this faith referred to a promise made to the church not to marry, it could not be called their first faith, *ver. 13.* Withal they learn to be idle, and not only idle, but tattlers, &c. Observe, That it is seldom that those that are idle are only idle, they learn to be tattlers and busy-bodies, and to make mischief among neighbours, and sow discord among brethren. Those who had not attained to such a gravity of mind as was fit for the deaconesses, or the widows that were taken among the church's poor, let them marry, bear children, &c. *ver. 14.* Observe, If house-keepers do not mind their business, but are tattlers, they give occasion to the adversaries of Christianity to reproach the Christian name, which, it seems, there were some instances of, *ver. 15.*

We learn hence, 1. In the primitive church there was care taken of poor widows, and provision made for them; and the churches of Christ, in these days, should follow so good an example as far as they are able. 2. In the distribution of the church's charity or alms, great care is to be taken, that those share in the bounty, who most want it, and best deserve it; a widow was not to be taken into the primitive church that had relations who were able to maintain her, or who was not well reported of for good works, but lived in pleasure: *but the younger widows refuse, for when they have begun to wax wonton against Christ, they will marry.* 3. The credit of religion, and the reputation of Christian churches, is very much concerned in the character and behaviour of those that are taken into any employment in the church, though of a lower nature; such as the business of deaconesses, or that receive alms of the church, if they do not behave well, but are tattlers, busy-bodies, &c. they will give occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully. 4. Christianity obliges its professors to relieve their indigent friends, particularly poor widows, that the church may not be charged with

them, that it may relieve them that are widows indeed; rich people should be ashamed to burden the church with their poor relations, when it is with difficulty that those are supplied who have no children or nephews, that is, grand-children, that are in a capacity to relieve them.

17. Let the elders that rule well, be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. 18. For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn: and, The labourer is worthy of his reward. 19. Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses. 20. Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear. 21. I charge thee before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality. 22. Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other mens sins: keep thy self pure. 23. Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomachs sake, and thine often infirmities. 24. Some mens sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after. 25. Likewise also the good works of some are manifest beforehand; and they that are otherwise cannot be hid.

Here are directions concerning ministers.

1. Care must be taken that they be honourably maintained, *ver. 17. Let the elders that rule well, be counted worthy of double honour*, i. e. of double maintenance, double to what they have had, or, to what others have. *Especially they who labour in the word and doctrine*, i. e. those that are more laborious than others. Observe, The presbytery ruled, and the same that ruled were those that laboured in the word and doctrine: they had not one to preach to them, and another to rule them, but the work was done by one and the same person.

Some have imagined by the elders that rule well, the apostle means lay-elders who were employed in ruling, but not in teaching; they were concerned in church-government, but did not meddle with the administration of the word and sacraments; and I confess this is the plainest text of scripture that can be found to countenance such an opinion; but it seems a little strange, that mere ruling elders should be accounted worthy of double honour: when the apostle preferred preaching to baptizing, and much more would he prefer it to ruling the church, and it is more strange the apostle should take no notice of them when he treats of church officers; but as it is hinted before, they had not, in the primitive church, one to preach to them, and another to rule them, but ruling and teaching were performed by the same persons, only some might labour more in the word and doctrine than others. Here we have, 1. The work of ministers, It consists principally of two things, ruling well, and labouring in the word and doctrine; this was the main business of elders or presbyters in the days of the apostles. 2. The honour due to them who were not idle, but laborious in this work, they were worthy of double honour, esteem and maintenance. He quotes scripture to confirm this command concerning the maintenance of ministers, that we would think foreign; but it intimates what a significance there was in many of the laws of Moses, and particularly in that, *Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn*, *Deut. xxv. 4.* The beasts that were employed in treading out the corn (for that way they took instead of threshing it) were allowed to feed while they did work, so that the more work they did, the more food they had; therefore let the elders that labour in the word and doctrine be well provided for, *for the labourer is worthy of his reward*, *Matt. x. 10.* and all the reason in the world he should have it.

We hence learn, 1. God, both under the law, and now under the gospel, hath taken care that his ministers be well provided for; doth God take care for oxen, and will he not take care of his own servants? The ox only treadeth out the corn, of which they make the bread that perisheth, but ministers break the bread of life which endureth for ever. 2. The comfortable subsistence of ministers, as it is God's appointment that they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel, *1 Cor. ix. 14.* so it is their just due, as much as the reward of the labourer; and those who would have ministers starved, or not comfortably provided for, God will require it of them another day.

2. Concerning the accusation of ministers, *ver. 10. Against an elder receive not an accusation but before two or three witnesses*; here is the scripture method of proceeding against an elder, when accused of any crime. Observe, 1. There must be an accusation, it must not be a flying uncertain report, but an accusation, containing a certain charge, must be drawn up. Farther, He is not to be proceeded against by way of enquiry, this is according to the modern practice of the inquisition, which draws up articles for men to purge themselves of such crimes, or else to accuse themselves, but according to the advice of St. Paul, there must be an accusation brought against an elder. 2. This accusation is

not to be received, unless supported by two or three credible witnesses, and the accusation must be received before them, that is, the accused must have the accusers face to face, because the reputation of a minister is, in a particular manner, a tender thing; and therefore, before any thing be done in the least to blemish that reputation, great care must be taken that the thing alledged against him be well proved, that he be not reproached upon an uncertain surmise; but, *ver. 20. them that sin, rebuke before all, i. e. thou needest not be so tender of other people, but rebuke them publickly.* Or, them that sin before all, rebuke before all, that the plaister may be as wide as the wound, and that those who are in danger of sinning by the example of their fall, may take warning by the rebuke given them for it, that others also may fear.

1. Publick scandalous sinners must be rebuked publickly, as their sin hath been publick, and committed before many, or at last come to the hearing of all, so their reproof must be publick, and before all. 2. Publick rebuke is designed for the good of others, that they may fear, as well as for the good of the party rebuked; as it was ordered under the law, that publick offenders should receive publick punishment; and all Israel shall hear and fear, and do no more wickedly.

3. Concerning the ordination of ministers, *ver. 22. lay hands suddenly on no man*; it seems to be meant of the ordaining of men to the office of the ministry, which ought not to be done rashly and inconsiderately, and before due trial made of their gifts and graces, their abilities and qualifications for it.

Some understand it of absolution, be not too hasty in laying hands on any, remit not the censure of the church to any, till first time be taken for the proof of their sincerity in their repentance, *neither be partaker of other mens sins*; implying, that those that are too easy in remitting the censures of the church, encourage others in the sins which are thus connived at, and make themselves thereby guilty. Observe, We have great need to watch over ourselves at all times, that we do not make our selves partakes of other mens sins. Keep thyself pure, not only from doing the like thyself, but from countenancing it, or being any way accessory to it in others.

Here is, 1. A caution against rash ordinations of ministers, or absolution of those that have been under church-censures, lay hands suddenly on no man. 2. Those that are rash, either in the one case or the other, will make themselves partakers in other mens sins. 3. We must keep ourselves pure, if we will be pure; the grace of God makes and keeps us pure, but it is by our own endeavours.

That, *ver. 24, 25.* seems to refer to absolution. *Some mens sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment, and some follow after, &c.* Observe, Ministers have need of a great deal of wisdom, to know how to accommodate themselves to the variety of offences and offenders, that they have occasion to deal with.

1. Some mens sins are so plain and obvious, and not found by secret search, that there is no dispute concerning the bringing of them under the censures of the church, they go before to judgment to lead them to censure.

2. Others, they follow after, i. e. their wickedness doth not presently appear, nor till after a due search hath been made concerning it. Or, as some understand it, some mens sins continue after they are censured; they are not reformed by the censure, and in that case there must be no absolution.

3. As to the evidences of repentance; *the good works of some are manifest beforehand.* And they that are otherwise, i. e. whose good works do not appear, their wickedness cannot be hid, and so it will be easy to discern who are to be absolved, and who are not.

1. There are secret, and there are open sins; some mens sins are open before-hand, and going before unto judgment, and some they follow after. 2. Sinners must be differently dealt with by the church. 3. The effects of church-censures are very different, some are thereby humbled and brought to repentance, so that their good works are manifest beforehand, while it is quite otherwise with others. 4. The incorrigible cannot be hid, for God will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of all hearts.

Lastly, As to Timothy himself.

1. Here is a charge to him to be careful of his office: And a solemn charge it is, *I charge thee before God, as thou wilt answer it to God before the holy and elect angels; observe these things without partiality, ver. 21.* Observe, It ill becomes ministers to be partial, and to have respect of persons, and to prefer one before another upon any secular account. He charges him, by all that is dear, *before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels,* to guard against partiality.

2. Ministers must give an account to God and the Lord Jesus Christ, whether, and how they have observed all things given them in charge; and wo to them if they have been partial in their ministrations out of any worldly politick view.

3. He charges him to take care of his health, *drink no longer water, &c.* It seems, Timothy was a mortified man to the pleasures of sense; he drank water, and he was a man of no strong constitution of body, and for that reason Paul advises him to use wine for the helping of his stomach, and the recruiting of

his nature. Observe, It is a little wine, for ministers must not be given to much wine, so much as may be for the health of the body, not so as to distemper it; for God hath made wine to rejoice man's heart. 1. It is the will of God that people should take all due care of their bodies: As we are not to make them our masters, so neither our slaves; but to use them so as they may be most fit and helpful to us in the service of God. Observe, 2. Wine is most proper for sickly and weak people, whose stomachs are often out of order, and who labour under infirmities. *Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine to those that be of heavy hearts, Prov. xxxi. 6.* 3. Wine should be used as an help, and not an hindrance to our work and usefulness.

CHAP. VI.

1. *He treats of the duty of servants, ver. 1, 2.* 2. *Of false teachers, ver. 3, 4, 5.* 3. *Of godliness and covetousness, ver. 6—11.* 4. *What Timothy was to flee, and what to follow, ver. 11—13.* 5. *A solemn charge, ver. 13—17.* And, 6. *A charge for the rich, ver. 17, 18, 19.* And lastly, *A charge to Timothy, ver. 20, 21.*

1. **L**ET as many servants as are under the yoke, count their own masters worthy of all honour; that the name of God, and his doctrine be not blasphemed. 2. And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren: but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit. These things teach and exhort. 3. If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, 4. He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmises, 5. Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.

Here is,

1. The duty of servants. He had spoken before of church-relations, here of our family-relations. Servants are here said to be under the yoke, which notes both subjection and labour; they are yoked to work, not to be idle. If Christianity finds servants under the yoke, it continues them under it; for the gospel doth not cancel the obligations any lie under, either by the law of nature, or by mutual consent. They must respect their masters, count them worthy of all honour (because they are their masters) i. e. of all the respect, and observance, and compliance, and obedience, that is justly expected from servants to their masters. Not that they were to think that of them which they were not; but as their masters they must count them worthy of all that honour which was fit for them to receive, *that the name of God be not blasphemed.* If servants that embraced the Christian religion should grow insolent and disobedient to their masters, the doctrine of Christ would be reflected on for their sakes, as if it had made men worse livers than they had been before they had received the gospel. Observe, If the professors of religion misbehave themselves, *the name of God and his doctrine* is in danger of being blasphemed, by those that seek occasions to speak evil of that worthy name by which we are called. And this is a good reason why we should all carry ourselves well that we may prevent the occasion, which many seek, and will be very apt to lay hold of, to speak ill of religion for our sakes.

Or, suppose the master were a Christian, and a believer, and the servant a believer too, would not that excuse him, because in Christ there is neither bond nor free? No, by no means, for Jesus Christ did not come to dissolve the bond of civil relation, but to strengthen it. They that have believing masters, let not them despise them, because they are brethren; for that brotherhood relates only to spiritual privileges, not to any outward dignity nor advantage: Those misunderstand and abuse their religion, who make it a pretence for denying the duties that they owe to their relations; nay, rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved. They must think themselves the more obliged to serve them, because the faith and love that bespeaks men Christians, obliges them to do good; and that is all wherein their service consists. Observe, That it is a great encouragement to us in doing our duty to our relations, if we have reason to think they are faithful and beloved, and partakers of the benefit, i. e. of the benefit of Christianity. Observe, Believing masters and servants are brethren, and partakers of the benefit, for in Christ Jesus there is neither bond nor free, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus, Gal. iii. 28. Timothy is appointed to teach and exhort these things. Observe, That ministers must preach not only the general duties of all, but the duties of particular relations.

2. Paul here warns Timothy to withdraw from those that corrupted the doctrine of Christ, and made it the subject of strife, and debate, and controversy. *If any man teach otherwise*, ver. 3, 4, 5. *i. e.* do not preach practically; do not teach and exhort that which is for the promoting of serious godliness, if he will not consent to wholesome words, words that have a direct tendency to heal the soul, if he will *not consent* to these, even the *words of our Lord Jesus Christ*. Observe, We are not required to consent to any words, as wholesome words, but only the words of our Lord Jesus Christ; but those we must give our unfeigned assent and consent to, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness. Observe, The doctrine of our Lord Jesus, is a doctrine according to godliness; it hath a direct tendency to make people godly; but he that doth not do so, is proud, ver. 4. and contentious, ignorant, and doth a great deal of mischief to the church, knowing nothing. Observe, Commonly those are most proud that know least, for with all their knowledge they do not know themselves, but doting about questions. Those who fall off from the plain practical doctrines of Christianity, fall in with controversies, which eat out the life and power of religion; they dote about questions and strifes of words, which do a great deal of mischief in the church, are the occasion of envy, strife, railings, evil surmising. When men are not content with the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the doctrine which is according to godliness, but will frame notions of their own, and impose them, and that too, in their own words, which man's wisdom teacheth, and not in the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth, 1 Cor. ii. 13. they sow the seeds of all mischief in the church. Hence come perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, ver. 5. disputes that are all subtilty, and no solidity. Observe, Men of corrupt minds are destitute of the truth. The reason why mens minds are corrupt is, because they do not stick to the truth, as it is in Jesus. Supposing that gain is godliness, *i. e.* making religion truckle to their secular interest: From such as these Timothy is warned to withdraw himself.

We observe, 1. The words of our Lord Jesus Christ are wholesome words, they are the fittest to prevent or heal the church's wounds, as well as to heal a wounded conscience, for Christ hath the tongue of the learned to speak a word in season to him that is weary, Isa. l. 4. The words of Christ are the best to prevent ruptures in the church; for none that profess faith in him, will dispute the aptness or authority of his words, who is their lord and teacher: And it hath never gone well with the church, since the words of men have claimed a regard equal to his words, and, in some case, a much greater. 2. Whoever doth teach otherwise, and doth not consent to these wholesome words: He is proud, knowing nothing, for pride and ignorance commonly go together. 3. St. Paul sets a brand only on those that consent not to the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the doctrine which is according to godliness; they are proud, knowing nothing, &c. other words more wholesome he knew not. 4. We learn the sad effects of doting about questions and strifes of words, of such doting about questions cometh envy, strife, evil surmising, and perverse disputings; when men leave the wholesome words of our Lord Jesus Christ, they will never agree in other words, either of their own or other mens inventions, but will perpetually wrangle and quarrel about them; and this will produce envy, when they see the words of others preferred to those they have adopted for their own; and this will be attended with jealousies and suspicions of one another, called here evil surmising; then they will proceed to perverse disputings. 5. Such persons who are given to perverse disputings appear to be men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, and who act in this manner for the sake of gain, which is all their godliness, supposing gain to be godliness, contrary to the apostle's judgment, who reckoned godliness great gain. 6. Good ministers and Christians will withdraw themselves from such, come out from among them, my people, and be ye separate, says the Lord; from such withdraw thyself.

6. But godliness with contentment is great gain. 7. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. 8. And having food and raiment, let us be therewith content. 9. But they that will be rich, fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. 10. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. 11. But thou, O man of God, flee these things: and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. 12. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.

From the mention of the abuse which some put upon religion, making it to serve their secular advantages, the apostle takes occasion to shew the excellency of contentment, and the evil of covetousness.

1. The excellency of contentment, ver. 6, 7, 8. Those that think Christianity is an advantageous profession for this world, though in the sense they meant, it is false; yet it is undoubtedly true that though Christianity is the worst trade, it is the best calling in the world. Those that make a trade of it merely to serve their turn for this world, will be disappointed and find it a sorry trade; but they that mind it as their calling, and make a business of it, will find it a gainful calling, for it hath the promise of the life that now is, as well as that which is to come. The truth he lays down is, that *godliness with contentment is great gain*. Some read it, *godliness with a competency*, *i. e.* if a man have but a little in this world; yet if he have but enough to carry him through it, he needs desire no more, his godliness with that will be his great gain; *for a little which a righteous man hath, is better than the riches of many wicked*. Psal. xxxvii. 15. we read it, *godliness with contentment*; godliness is itself great gain, it is profitable to all things, and wherever there is true godliness, there will be contentment, but those that are arrived to the highest pitch of contentment with their godliness, are certainly the easiest, happiest people in this world. *Godliness with contentment*, *i. e.* Christian contentment, content must come from principles of godliness, that is great gain; it is all the wealth in the world. He that is godly is sure to be happy in another world, and if withal he do by contentment accommodate himself to his condition in this world, he hath enough.

Here we have, 1. A Christian's gain, it is godliness with contentment, this is the true way to gain, yea, it is gain itself. 2. A Christian's gain is great, it is not like the little gain of worldlings, who are so fond of a little worldly advantage. 3. Godliness is ever accompanied with contentment in a greater or lesser degree; all truly godly people have learned with St. Paul, in whatever state they are to be therewith content, Phil. iv. 11. They are content with what God allots for them, well knowing, that is best for them. Let us all then endeavour after godliness with contentment.

The reason he gives for it is, *for we brought nothing with us into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out*, ver. 7. This is a reason why we should be content with a little.

1. Because we can challenge nothing as a debt that is due to us, *for we came naked into the world*; whatever we have had since, we are obliged to the providence of God for it; but he that gave may take what and when he pleases. We had our beings, our bodies, our lives, which are more than meat, which are more than raiment, when we came into the world, though we came naked and brought nothing with us; may we not then be content while our beings and lives are continued to us, though we have not every thing we would have? We brought nothing with us into this world, and yet God provided for us, care was taken of us, we have been fed all our lives long unto this day, and therefore when we are reduced to the greatest straits, we cannot be poorer than when we came into this world, and yet then we were provided for; therefore let us trust in God, for the remaining part of our pilgrimage.

2. *We shall carry nothing with us out of this world*; a shroud, a coffin, and a grave, are all that the richest man in the world can have from his thousands. Therefore why should we covet much? Why should we not be content with a little, because how much soever we have we must leave it behind us? Eccl. v. 15, 16.

From hence he infers, ver. 8. *Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content*. Food and a covering including habitation as well as raiment. Observe, If God give us the necessary supports of life, we ought to be content therewith, though we have not the ornaments and delights of it. If nature should be content with a little, grace should be content with less; though we have not dainty food, though we have not costly raiment, if we have but food and raiment convenient for us, we ought to be content, this was Agur's prayer, *Give me neither poverty nor riches, feed me with food convenient for me*, Prov. xxx. 8.

Here we see, 1. The folly of placing our happiness in these things, when we did not bring any thing into this world with us, and we can carry nothing out; what will these do when death shall strip them of their happiness and portion? And they must take an everlasting farewell of all these things on which they have so much doted. They may say with poor Micah, ye have taken away my gods, and what have I more? Judg. xviii. 24. 2. The necessities of life, are the bounds of a true Christian's desire, and with these he will endeavour to be content; his desires are not insatiable, no, a little, a few comforts of this life, will serve him, and these he may hope to enjoy, having food and raiment.

2. The evil of covetousness, ver. 9. *They that will be rich fall into a temptation and a snare*, *i. e.* that set their hearts upon the wealth of this world, and are resolved, right or wrong, they will have it. It is not said they that are rich, but they that will be rich, that is, that place their happiness in worldly wealth, that covet it inordinately, and are eager and violent in the pursuit of it. They that are such fall into temptation and a snare, unavoidably, for when the devil sees which way their lusts carry them, he will soon bait his hook accordingly. He knew how fond Achan would be of a wedge of gold, and therefore laid that before him. They fall into many foolish and hurtful lusts.

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The apostle supposes, 1. Some will be rich, i. e. they are resolved upon it, nothing short of a great abundance will satisfy. 2. Such will not be safe or innocent, for they will be in danger of ruining themselves for ever; they fall into temptation, and a snare, &c. 3. Worldly lusts are foolish and hurtful, for they drown men in destruction and perdition.

Observe, 4. It is good for us to consider the mischievousness of worldly fleshly lusts. They are foolish, and therefore we should be ashamed of them; *hurtful*, and therefore we should be afraid of them, especially considering to what degree they are *hurtful*, for they *drown men in destruction and perdition*.

The *love of money is the root of all evil*, ver. 10. What sins will not men be drawn to by the love of money? particularly this was at the bottom of the apostasy of many from the faith of Christ; while they *coveted money*, they *erred from the faith*, they quitted their Christianity, and *pierced themselves through with many sorrows*.

1. Observe what is the root of all evil: the love of money; people may have money, and yet not love it; but if they love it inordinately, it will push them on to all evil. 2. Covetous persons will quit the faith, if that be the way to get money, *which while some coveted after they have erred from the faith*; Demas *hath forsaken me, having loved this present world*, 2 Tim. iv. 10. For the world was dearer to him, than Christianity.

Observe, Those that err from the faith, pierce themselves with many sorrows; they that depart from God, do but treasure up sorrows for themselves.

3. Hence he takes occasion both to caution Timothy against their lusts, and to counsel him to keep in the way of God, and his duty, and particularly to fulfil the trust reposed in him as a minister. He addresses himself to him as *a man of God*. Ministers are men of God, and ought to carry themselves accordingly in every thing. Men employed for God, devoted to his honour more immediately. The prophets under the Old Testament were called men of God.

(1.) He charges Timothy to take heed of the love of money, which had been so pernicious to many, *flee these things*. It is ill becoming any men, but especially men of God, to set their hearts upon the things of this world; men of God should be taken up with the things of God.

(2.) To arm him against the love of the world, he directs him to follow that which is good, *follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness*. Righteousness in his conversation towards men, godliness towards God, faith and love as living principles, to support him and carry him on in the practice both of righteousness and godliness. They that follow after righteousness and godliness from a principle of faith and love, have need to put on patience and meekness. Patience to bear both the rebukes of providence, and the reproaches of men, and meekness wherewith to instruct gainayers, and pass by the affronts and injuries that are done us.

Observe, It is not enough that men of God flee these things, but they must follow after what is directly contrary thereto; further, what excellent persons men of God are, who follow after righteousness, &c. They are the excellent of the earth, and being acceptable to God, they should be approved of men.

(3.) He exhorts them to do the part of a soldier, *Fight the good fight of faith*. Note, Those that will get to heaven must fight their way thither. There must be a conflict with corruption and temptations, and the opposition of the power of darkness. Again, It is a good fight, it is a good cause, and it will have a good issue; farther, it is the fight of faith; we do not war after the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, 2 Cor. x. 3, 4.

(4.) He exhorts him to lay *hold on eternal life*. Observe, 1. Eternal life is the crown proposed to us, for our encouragement to war, and to fight the good fight of faith, the good warfare. 2. This we must lay hold on as those that are afraid of coming short of it, and losing it. Lay hold, and take heed of losing our hold.

Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown, Rev. iii. 11. 3. We are called to the fight, and to lay hold on eternal life. 4. The profession Timothy, and all faithful ministers make before many witnesses is a good profession; for they profess and engage to fight the good fight of faith, and to lay hold on eternal life; their calling and their own profession oblige them unto this.

13. I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and *before Christ Jesus*, who *before Pontius Pilate* witnesseth a good confession; 14. That thou keep *this* commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: 15. Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; 16. Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen. 17. Charge

them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy: 18. That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; 19. Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life. 20. O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: 21. Which some professing, have erred concerning the faith. Grace be with thee. Amen.

He charges him to keep this commandment without spot. That is, the whole work of his ministry, all the trust reposed in him, all the service expected from him, he must keep it without spot, *unrebukeable*, i. e. he must carry himself so in his ministry, as that he might not lay himself open to any blame, nor incur any blemish.

What are the motives to move him to this?

1. He gives them a solemn charge, *I give thee a charge in the sight of God, that thou do this*. He charges him, as he will answer it at the great day, to that God whose eyes are upon us all, who sees what we are, and what we do. *God who quickens all things*, i. e. who hath life in himself, and is the fountain of life. This should quicken us to the service of God, that we serve a God who quickens all things. He charges him before *Christ Jesus*, to whom in a peculiar manner he stood related as a minister of his gospel; *who before Pontius Pilate* witnessed a good confession.

Observe, Christ died not only as a sacrifice, but as a martyr, and he witnessed a good confession; when he was arraigned before Pilate, saying, *John xviii. 36, 37. My kingdom is not of this world, I am come to bear witness unto the truth*. That good confession of his before Pilate, *My kingdom is not of this world*, should be effectual to draw off all his followers, both ministers and people, from the love of this world.

2. He minds him of the confession that he himself had made. *Thou hast professed a good profession before many witnesses*, ver. 1, 2. when he was ordained by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. The obligation of that was still upon him, and he must live up to that, and be quickened by that, to do the work of his ministry.

3. He minds him of Christ's second coming. Keep this commandment, until the *appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ*, i. e. keep it as long as thou livest, till Christ come at death to give thee a discharge. Keep it with an eye to his second coming, when we must all give an account of the talents we have been entrusted with, *Luke xvi. 2*.

1. The Lord Jesus Christ will appear, and it will be a glorious appearing, not like his first appearing in the days of his humiliation. 2. Ministers should have an eye to this appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ in all their ministrations. 3. Till his appearing they are to keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable.

Mentioning the appearing of Christ as one that loved it, he loves to speak of it, and loves to speak of him who shall then appear. The appearing of Christ is certain, *he shall shew it*; but it is not for us to know the time and season of it, for the Father hath kept that in his own power: Let this suffice us, that in time he shall shew it, in the time that he thinks fit for it.

Concerning Christ and God the Father he here speaks great things.

1. That God is the *only Potentate*, the powers of earthly princes are all derived from him, and depend upon him: The powers that be, are ordained of God, *Rom. xiii. 2*. He is the only Potentate that is absolute and sovereign, and perfectly independent.

2. He is the *blessed* and only Potentate, infinitely happy, and nothing can in the least impair his happiness.

3. He is *King of kings, and Lord of lords*. All the kings of the earth derive their power from him, he gave them their crowns, and they hold them under him, and he hath a sovereign dominion over them. This is Christ's title, *Rev. xix. 16. Upon his vesture and his thigh*; for he hath a name higher than the kings of the earth.

4. He only hath immortality; he only is immortal in himself, and hath immortality as he is the fountain of it, for the immortality of angels and spirits is derived from him.

5. He dwells in inaccessible light. *Light which no man can approach unto*, i. e. no man can get to heaven, but those whom he is pleased to bring thither, and admit into his kingdom.

6. He is invisible; *whom no man hath seen, nor can see*. It is impossible that mortal eyes should bear the brightness of the divine glory. No man can see God and live.

Having mentioned these glorious attributes, he concludes with a doxology. *To him be honour and power everlasting. Amen*. God having all power and honour to himself, it is our duty to ascribe all power and honour to him.

1. What an evil is sin, when committed against such a God, the blessed and only Potentate? The evil of it rises in proportion to the dignity of him against whom it is committed. 2. Great is his condescension to take notice of such mean and vile creatures as we are; What are we then that the blessed God, the King of kings, and Lord of lords should seek after us? 3. Blessed are they who are admitted to dwell with this great and blessed Potentate; happy are thy men, says the queen of Sheba to king Solomon, happy are these thy servants, who stand continually before thee, 1 King. x. 8. Much more happy are they who are allowed to stand before the King of kings. 4. Let us love, adore, and praise the great God; for who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? For thou only art holy, Rev. xv. 4.

The apostle adds, by way of postscript, a lesson for rich people, ver. 17, 18, 19. Timothy must charge them that are rich to take care of the temptations, and improve the opportunities of their prosperous estate.

1. Caution them to take heed of pride. That is a sin that easily befalls rich people, whom the world smiles upon. Charge them *that they be not high-minded*, nor think of themselves above what is meet, nor be puffed up with their wealth.

2. Caution them against vain confidence in their wealth. Charge them that they *trust not in uncertain riches*. Nothing more uncertain than the wealth of this world; many have had much of it one day, and been stripped of all the next. Riches make themselves wings, and fly away as an eagle, &c. Prov. xxiii. 5.

3. He must charge them to *trust in God, the living God*; to make him their hope *who giveth us richly all things to enjoy*. They that are rich must see God giving them their riches, and giving them to *enjoy them richly*; for many have riches, but enjoy them poorly, not having a heart to use them.

4. He must charge them to do good with what they have, for what is the best estate worth, any more than as it gives a man an opportunity of doing so much the more good? *that they be rich in good works*. Those are truly rich that are rich in good works: That they be *ready to distribute, willing to communicate*. Not only to do it, but to do it willingly, for *God loves a cheerful giver*.

5. He must charge them to think of another world, and prepare for that which is done by works of charity, *laying up in store a good foundation against the time to come*, that they may take hold on eternal life.

(1.) Ministers must not be afraid of the rich; be they ever so rich, they must speak to them, and charge them. 2. They must caution them against pride and vain confidence in their riches, that they be not high-minded, nor trust, &c. Stir them up to works of piety and charity, *that they do good*, &c. 3. This is the way for the rich to lay up in store for themselves for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life; in the way of well-doing we are to seek for glory, honour, and immortality, *and eternal life will be the end of all*, Rom. ii. 7.

(2.) Here is a lesson for ministers in the charge given to Timothy, *Keep that which is committed to thy trust*. Every minister is a trustee, and it is a treasure committed to his trust, which he hath to keep. The truths of God, the ordinances of God, keep these, *avoiding profane and vain babbling*. Not affecting human eloquence, which the apostle calls vain babbling, or human learning, which many times opposes the truths of God, but keep close to the written word, for that is committed to our trust. Some that have been very proud of their learning, their *science, which is falsely so called*, have by that been debauched in their principles, and been drawn away from the faith of Christ, which is a good reason why we should keep to the plain word of the gospel, and resolve to live and die by that.

Observe, 1. Ministers cannot be too earnestly exhorted to keep what is committed to their trust, because it is a great trust lodged with them. O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust! *q. d.* I cannot conclude without charging thee again; whatever thou dost be sure keep this trust, for it is too great a trust to be betrayed. 2. Ministers are to avoid babblings, if they would keep what is committed to them, because they are vain and profane. 3. That science that opposes the truth of the gospel, is falsely so called, it is not true science, for if it was, it would approve of the gospel, and consent to it. 4. Those who are so fond of such science, are in great danger of erring concerning the faith; they who are for advancing reason above faith, are in danger of leaving faith. Lastly, Our apostle concludes with a solemn prayer and benediction, *Grace be with thee, Amen*. Observe, This is a short, yet comprehensive prayer for our friends. Grace be with them, for grace comprehends in it all that is good, and grace is an earnest, yea, a beginning of glory, for wherever God gives grace, he will give glory, and will not withhold any good thing from him that walketh uprightly.

Grace be with you all. Amen.

A N

E X P O S I T I O N

O F T H E

Second Epistle of St. P A U L to T I M O T H Y,

W I T H

P R A C T I C A L O B S E R V A T I O N S.

This second epistle Paul wrote to Timothy from Rome, when he was a prisoner there, and in danger of his life, by these words, I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand, chap. iv. ver. 6. It appears that his removal out of this world, in his own apprehension, was not far off, especially considering the rage and malice of his persecutors; and that he had been brought before the emperor Nero, which he calls his first answer when no man stood with him, but all men forsook him, chap. iv. ver. 16. And interpreters agree that this was the last epistle he wrote. Where Timothy now was, is not certain: The scope of this epistle somewhat differs from that of the former, not so much relating to his office as an evangelist, as to his personal conduct and behaviour.

C H A P. I.

After the introduction, ver. 1, 2. we have, 1. Paul's sincere love to Timothy, ver. 3—6. 2. Divers exhortations given to him, ver. 6—15. 3. He speaks of Phygellus and Hermogenes, with others, and closes with Onesiphorus, ver. 15, ad fin.

1. **P**AUL an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life, which is in Christ Jesus; 2. To Timothy my dearly beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father, and Christ Jesus our Lord. 3. I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day: 4. Greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy: 5. When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also.

Here is, 1. The inscription of the epistle; Paul calls himself *an apostle by the will of God*, merely by the good pleasure of God, and by his grace, which he professes himself unworthy of, *according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus*, i. e. according to the gospel. The gospel is the promise of life in Christ Jesus; life the end, and Christ the way, *John* xiv. 6. The life is put into the promise, and both are sure in Christ Jesus; the faithful witness, *For all the promises of God in Christ Jesus are yea, and all amen*, 2 *Cor.* i. 20. He calls Timothy his *beloved son*; Paul had a dear love for him, both because he had been an instrument of his conversion, and because as a son with his father he had served with him in the gospel.

We here learn, 1. St. Paul was an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, as he did not receive the gospel of man, nor was taught it, but had it by the revelation of Jesus Christ, *Gal.* i. 12. so his commission to be an apostle, was not by the will of man, but of God; in the former epistle he says it was by the commandment of God our Saviour, and here by the will of God; God called him to be an apostle. 2. We have the promise of life, blessed be God for it, *in hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lye, promised before the world began*, *Tit.* i. 2. It is a promise to discover the freeness and the certainty of it. 3. This as well as all other promises are in and through Christ Jesus; they all take their rise from the mercy of God in Christ, and they are sure, and we may safely depend on them. 4. The grace, mercy and peace, which even St. Paul's dearly beloved son Timothy wanted, comes from God the Father, and Christ Jesus our Lord, and therefore the one as well as the other is the giver of these blessings, and ought to be applied to for them. Lastly, The best want these blessings, and they are the best we can ask for our dearly beloved friend, that they may have grace to help them in the time of need and mercy, to pardon what is amiss, and so may have peace with God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

2. Paul's thanksgiving to God for Timothy's faith and holiness: He thanks God that he remembered Timothy in his prayers. Observe, That whatever good we do, and whatever good office we perform for our friends, God must have the glory of it, and we must give him thanks. It is he that puts it into our hearts to remember such and such in our prayers. Paul was much in prayer, he prayed night and day; in all his prayers he was mindful of his friends, he particularly prayed for good ministers, he prayed for Timothy, and *had remembrance of him in his prayers night and day*; he did this *without ceasing*; prayer was his constant business, and he never forgot his friends in his prayers as we often do. *Paul served God from his forefathers with a pure conscience*. It was a comfort to him that he was born in God's house, and was of the seed of those that served God; as likewise that he had served him with a pure conscience, according to the best of his light; he had kept *conscience void of offence*, and made it his daily exercise to do so, *Acts* xxiv. 16. *He greatly desired to see Timothy*, out of the affection he had for him, that he might have some conversation with him, *being mindful of his tears* at their last parting. Timothy was sorry to part with Paul, he wept at parting, and therefore Paul desired to see him again, because he had perceived by that, what a true affection he had for him. He thanks God, that Timothy kept up the religion of his ancestors, *ver.* 5. Observe, The entail of religion descended upon Timothy by the mother's side, he had a good mother, and a good grandmother: They believed, though his father did not, *Acts* xvi. It is a comfortable thing when children imitate the faith and holiness of their godly parents, and tread in their steps, 3 *John* 4. Dwelt in thy grandmother and thy mother, *and I am persuaded that in thee also*. Paul had a very charitable opinion of his friends, was very willing to hope the best concerning them; indeed he had a great deal of reason

to believe well of Timothy, for he had *no man like-minded*, *Phil.* ii. 20.

Observe, 1. We are, according to St. Paul, to serve God with a pure conscience, so did his and our pious forefathers; this is to draw *near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our heart sprinkled from an evil conscience*, *Heb.* x. 22. 2. In our prayers we are to remember without ceasing our friends, especially the faithful ministers of Christ; St. Paul had remembrance of his dearly beloved son Timothy in his prayers night and day. 3. The faith that dwells in real believers is unfeigned, it is without hypocrisy; it is a faith that will stand the trial, and it dwells in them as a living principle. It was the matter of St. Paul's thanksgiving, that Timothy inherited the faith of his mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois, and ought to be ours, whenever we see the like; we should rejoice wheresoever we see the grace of God, so did Barnabas, *Acts* xi. 23, 24. I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in the truth, 2 *John* 4.

6. Wherefore I put thee in remembrance, that thou stir up the gift of God which is in thee, by the putting on of my hands. 7. For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. 8. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel, according to the power of God; 9. Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, 10. But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel: 11. Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. 12. For the which cause I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day. 13. Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. 14. That good thing which was committed unto thee, keep by the holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.

Here is an exhortation and excitation of Timothy to his duty, *ver.* 6. *I put thee in remembrance*; the best men need remembrancers; what we know we should be minded of, 2 *Pet.* iii. 1. *I write this to stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance*.

1. He exhorts him to stir up the gift of God, that was in him; stir it up as fire under the embers. It is meant of all the gifts and graces that God had given him to qualify him for the work of an evangelist, the gifts of the Holy Ghost, the extraordinary gifts that were conferred by the imposition of the apostle's hands. These he must stir up; i. e. he must exercise them, and so increase them: use gifts and have gifts; *to him that hath shall be given*, *Mat.* xxv. 22. he must take all opportunities to use these gifts, and so stir them up.

For that is the best way of increasing them, whether the gift of God in Timothy was ordinary or extraordinary, though I incline to the latter, yet he must stir it up, otherwise it would decay; further you see that gift was in him by the putting on of the apostle's hands, which I take to be distinct from his ordination, which was performed by the hands of the presbytery, 1 *Tim.* iv. 14. And it is likely Timothy had the Holy Ghost in his extraordinary gifts and graces conferred on him by the laying on of the apostle's hands, (for I reckon none but the apostles had the power of giving the Holy Ghost) and afterwards being thus richly furnished for the work of the ministry, was ordained by the presbytery.

The great hinderance of usefulness in the increase of our gifts, is slavish fear, therefore he warns him against this. *God hath not given us the spirit of fear*, *ver.* 7. it was through base fear that the evil servant buried his talent, and did not trade with it, *Matt.* xxv. 25. Now God hath therefore armed us against the spirit of fear, by often bidding us *fear not*; fear not the face of man; fear not the dangers you may meet with in the way of your duty; God hath delivered us from the spirit of fear, and hath given us the spirit of *power, and of love, and of a sound mind*. The spirit of *power*, i. e. of courage and resolution, to encounter difficulties and dangers; the spirit of love to God, which will carry us through the opposition we may meet with, as Jacob made nothing of the hard service he was to endure for Rachel. The spirit of love to God will set us above the fear of man, and all the hurt that man can do us. And the spirit of a *sound mind*, or quietness of mind, a peaceable enjoyment of ourselves, for we are oftentimes discouraged in our way, and work

by the creatures of their own fancy, and imagination, which a sober, solid thinking mind would obviate, and should easily answer.

The spirit God gives to his ministers, is not a fearful but courageous spirit, it is a spirit of power, for they speak in his name who hath all power, both in heaven and earth, and it is a spirit of love, for love to God and the souls of men, must inflame ministers in all their service, and it is a spirit of a sound mind, for they speak the words of truth and soberness.

2. He exhorts him to count upon afflictions, and get ready for them: *Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner.* Be not thou ashamed of the gospel, of the testimony thou hast born to it. The gospel of Christ is what we have none of us reason to be ashamed of. We must not be ashamed of those that are suffering for the gospel of Christ. Timothy must not be ashamed of good old Paul, though he was now in bonds. As he must not be afraid of suffering himself, so he must not be afraid of owning those that were sufferers for the cause of Christ.

1. The gospel is a testimony of our Lord, in and by that he bears testimony of himself to us, and by professing our adherence to it, we bear testimony of him and for him. 2. St. Paul was the Lord's prisoner, his prisoner, for his sake he was bound with a chain, *Eph. iv. 1, 3.* We have no reason to be ashamed, either of the testimony of our Lord, nor of his prisoners, if we are ashamed of either now, Christ will be ashamed of us hereafter; but be *then partaker of the affliction of the gospel according to the power of God*, i. e. expect afflictions for the gospel's sake, prepare for them, count upon them, be willing to take thy lot with the suffering saints in this world. *Be partaker of the affliction of the gospel*, or as it may be read, *do thou suffer with the gospel.* Not only sympathize with those that do suffer for it, but be ready to suffer with them, and suffer like them. If at any time the gospel be in distress, he that hopes for life and salvation by it, will be content to suffer with it. Observe, 1. Then we are likely to bear afflictions well, when we fetch strength and power from God to enable us to bear them: be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel, according to the power of God. 2. All Christians, but especially ministers, must expect afflictions and persecutions for the sake of the gospel. 3. These shall be proportioned, according to the power of God (*1 Cor. x. 13.*) resting upon us.

Mentioning God and the gospel, he takes notice what great things God hath done for us by the gospel, *ver. 9, 10.* To encourage him to suffer, he urges two considerations.

(1.) He shews him the nature of that gospel which he was called to suffer for, and the glorious and gracious designs and purposes of it. It is usual with Paul when he mentions Christ and the gospel of Christ, to digress from his subject, and enlarge upon them, so full was he of that which is all our salvation, and ought to be all our desire.

Observe, 1. The gospel aims at our salvation; *he hath saved us*, and we must not think much to suffer for that which we hope to be saved by. He hath begun to save us, and will complete it in due time, for God calls those things that be not, i. e. that are not yet completed as though they were, *Rom. iv. 17.* therefore he says, who hath saved us?

2. It is designed for our sanctification, *and called us with a holy calling*, i. e. called us to holiness. Christianity is a calling, a holy calling, it is the calling wherewith we are called, i. e. it is the calling to which we are called, to labour in it. Observe, All that shall be saved hereafter are sanctified now. Wherever the call of the gospel is an effectual call, it is found to be an holy call, making those holy, who are effectually called.

3. The rise of it is the free grace and eternal purpose of God in Jesus Christ. If we had merited it, it had been hard to suffer for it; but our salvation by it is of free grace, and not according to our works, and therefore we must not think much to suffer for it. This grace is said to be given us *before the world began*, i. e. in the purpose and design of God from all eternity; *in Christ Jesus*, for all the gifts that come from God to sinful man, come in and thorough Christ Jesus.

4. The gospel is the manifestation of this purpose and grace, *by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ*, who had lain in the bosom of the Father from eternity, and was perfectly apprized of all his gracious purposes, and by his appearing, that gracious purpose was made manifest to us. Did Jesus Christ suffer for it, and shall we think much to suffer for it?

5. By the gospel of Christ, death is abolished; *he hath abolished death*, not only weakened it, but taken it out of the way, hath broken the power of death over us, by taking away sin he hath abolished death, for the sting of death is sin, *1 Cor. xv. 56.* in altering the property of it, and breaking the power of it.

Death now of an enemy is become a friend, and is the gate by which we pass out of a troublesome, vexatious sinful world, into a world of perfect peace and purity, and the power thereof is broken, for death doth not triumph over those who believe the gospel, but they triumph over it. Oh! death where is thy sting? Oh! grave where is thy victory? *1 Cor. xv. 55.*

6. He hath brought life and immortality to light by the gospel, i. e. he hath shewed us another world, more clearly than it was be-

fore discovered under any former dispensation, and the happiness of that world; the certain recompence of our obedience by faith, we all with open face, as in a glass, behold the glory of God. He hath brought it to light, not only set it before us, but offered it to us by the gospel.

Let us value the gospel more than ever, as it is that whereby life and immortality is brought to light, for herein it hath the pre-eminence above all former discoveries, so that it is the gospel of life and immortality as it discovers them to us, and directs us in the ready way that leads thereto, as well as proposes the most weighty motives to excite our endeavours, in seeking after glory, honour and immortality.

(2.) Consider the example of blessed Paul, *ver. 11, 12.* He was appointed to preach the gospel, and particularly appointed to teach the Gentiles. He thought it a cause worth suffering for, and why should not Timothy think so too? No man need to be afraid or ashamed to suffer for the cause of the gospel. *I am not ashamed*, saith Paul, *for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.*

Observe, 1. Good men often suffer many things, for the best cause in the world, for the which cause I suffer these things; that is for my preaching, and adhering to the gospel. 2. They need not to be ashamed, the cause will bear them out, but those that oppose it, shall be clothed with shame. Observe, 3. Those that trust in Christ know whom they have trusted. He speaks with a holy triumph, and exaltation, as much as to say I stand on firm ground. I know I have lodged the great trust in the hands of the best trustee. *And am persuaded*, &c. What must we commit to Christ? Why the salvation of our souls, and their preservation to the heavenly kingdom, and what we so commit to him, he will keep. There is a day coming, when our souls will be enquired after; man! woman! thou hadst a soul committed to thee, what hast thou done with it? To whom was it offered, to God or Satan? How was it employed, in the service of sin, or in the service of Christ? There is a day coming, and it will be a very solemn and awful day, when we must give an account of our stewardship, *Luke xvi. 2.* give an account of our souls: Now if by an active obedient faith we commit it to Jesus Christ, we may be sure he is able to keep it, and it shall be forthcoming to our comfort in that day.

3. He exhorts him to *hold fast the form of sound words*, *ver. 13.*

1. *Have a form of sound words.* So it may be read. A short form, a catechism, an abstract of the first principles of religion, according to the scriptures; a scheme of sound words, a brief summary of the Christian faith, in a proper method, drawn out by thyself from the holy scriptures for thy own use, or rather by the form of sound words, I understand the holy scriptures themselves.

2. Having it, *hold it fast*, remember it; retain it, stick to it. Adhere to that in opposition to all heresies and false doctrine, which corrupt the Christian faith. Hold that fast, *which thou hast heard of me.* Paul was divinely inspired. It is good sticking to those forms of sound words which we have in the scriptures, for those we are sure were divinely inspired. That is found speech which cannot be condemned, *Titus ii. 8.* But how must it be held fast? *in faith and love*, i. e. assent to it as a *faithful saying*, and bid it welcome as *worthy of all acceptance.* Hold it fast in a good heart, that is the ark of the covenant, in which the tables both of law, and gospel, are most safely and profitably deposited, *Psal. cxix. 11.* Faith and love must go together; it is not enough to believe the sound words, and to give an assent to them, but we must love them, believe their truth, and love their goodness, and we must propagate the form of sound words in love, speaking the truth in love, *Ephes. iv. 15.* Faith and love which *is in Christ Jesus*, i. e. it must be Christian faith and love; faith and love fastening upon Jesus Christ, in and by whom God speaks to us and we to him. Timothy as a minister must *hold fast the form of sound words* for the benefit of others. *Of healing words* so it may be read; there is a healing virtue in the word of God, *he sent his word and healed them.* To the same purpose is that, *ver. 14.* *That good thing which was committed unto thee, keep by the Holy Ghost, which dwelleth in us.* That good thing was the form of sound words, the Christian doctrine which was committed to Timothy in his baptism and education as he was a Christian, and in his ordination as he was a minister.

The Christian doctrine is a trust committed to us; it is committed to Christians in general, but to ministers in particular; it is a good thing of unspeakable value in itself, and that will be of unspeakable advantage to us. It is a good thing indeed, for it is an inestimable jewel, for it discovers to us the unsearchable riches of Christ, *Ephes. iii. 8.* It is committed to us, to be preserved pure and intire, and to be transmitted to those that shall come after us, and we must *keep it*, and not contribute any thing to the corrupting of its purity, the weakening of its power, or the diminishing of its perfection. *Keep it by the Holy Ghost that dwelleth in us.* Observe, Even those that are never so well taught cannot keep what they have learned, no more than they could at first learn it, without the assistance of the holy Spirit. We must

not think to keep it by our own strength, but keep it by the Holy Ghost.

The Holy Ghost dwells in all good ministers and Christians; they are his temples, and he enables them to keep the gospel pure and uncorrupt, and yet they must use their best endeavours to keep this good thing, for the assistance and indwelling of the Holy Ghost doth not exclude mens endeavours, but they very well consist together.

15. This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes. 16. The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain. 17. But when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me. 18. The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day: And in how many things he ministered unto me at Ephesus, thou knowest very well.

Having exhorted Timothy to hold fast, &c. *ver. 13, 14.* the apostle mentions, 1. The apostasy of divers from the doctrine of Christ, *ver. 15.* It seems, in the best and purest ages of the church there were those that had embraced the Christian faith, and yet afterwards revolted from it, nay, there were many such. He doth not say that they were turned away from the doctrine of Christ, though it should seem they were, but they were turned away from him, turned their backs upon him, and disowned him in the time of his distress. And should we wonder at it, when many turned their backs on a much better than St. Paul? I mean the Lord Jesus Christ, *John vi. 66.*

2. He mentions the constancy of one that adhered to him, that was one Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain, *ver. 16.* Observe, 1. What kindness Onesiphorus had shewed to Paul: He refreshed him, he oft refreshed him with his letters, and counsels, and comforts, and he was not ashamed of my chain. Was not ashamed of him, notwithstanding the disgrace he was now under. He was kind to him not once or twice, but often; not only when he was at Ephesus among his own friends, but when Onesiphorus was at Rome; he took care to seek Paul out very diligently, and found him, *ver. 17.* Observe, That a good man will seek opportunities of doing good, and will not shun any that offer. At Ephesus he had ministered to him, and been very kind to him, Timothy knew it.

2. How Paul returns his kindness, *ver. 16—18.* He that receives a prophet, shall have a prophet's reward. He repays him with his prayers, the Lord give mercy unto Onesiphorus. It is like Onesiphorus was now absent, it is probable he was now with Paul, and he prays that his house might be kept during his absence.

Though the Papists will have it he was now dead, and from his praying for him, that he might find mercy; they conclude the warrantableness of praying for the dead, but who told them that Onesiphorus was dead! And can it be safe to ground a doctrine and practice of such importance, on a mere supposition and very great uncertainty?

He prays for Onesiphorus himself, as well as for his house, that he might find mercy in that day, in the day of death and of judgment, when Christ will recount all the good offices done to his poor members, as done to himself. Observe, 1. The day of death and judgment is an awful day that may be emphatically called the day. 2. We need desire no more to make us happy, than to find mercy of the Lord in that day, when those that have shewed no mercy, will have judgment without mercy. 3. The best Christians will want mercy in that day, looking for the mercy from our Lord Jesus Christ, *Jude 21.* 4. If you would have mercy then you must seek for it now of the Lord. 5. It is of and from the Lord we must have mercy, for unless the Lord hath mercy on us, in vain will be the pity and compassion of men or angels. 6. We are to seek and ask for mercy of the Lord, who is the giver and bestower of it, for the Lord Christ hath satisfied justice, that mercy might be displayed. We are to come to a throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in the time of need. Finally, the best thing we can ask, either for ourselves, or our friends is, that the Lord will grant to them, that they may find mercy of the Lord in that day, when they must pass out of time into eternity, and exchange this world for the other, and appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; the Lord then grant unto all of us, that we may find mercy of the Lord in that day.

C H A P. II.

In this chapter our apostle gives Timothy many exhortations and directions, which may be of great use to others, both ministers and Christians, for whom they were designed as well as for him.

1. He encourages him in his work, shewing him from whence he

must fetch help, *ver. 1.* 2. He must take care of a succession in the ministry, that the office might not die with him, *ver. 2.* 3. He exhorts him to constancy and perseverance in his work, as a soldier, and as an husbandman, considering what would be the end of all his sufferings, &c. *ver. 3—15.* 4. He must shun profane and vain babblings, *ver. 16, 17, 18.* for they will be pernicious and mischievous. 5. He speaketh of the foundation of God which standeth sure, *ver. 19—21.* 6. What he is to avoid, youthful lusts, and foolish and unlearned questions, and what to do, *ver. 22.* ad finem.

1. **T**HOU therefore my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. 2. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. 3. Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. 4. No man that warreth, entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. 5. And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully. 6. The husbandman that laboureth, must be first partaker of the fruits. 7. Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.

Here 1. Paul encourages Timothy to constancy and perseverance in his work, *ver. 1.* Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Those that have work to do for God, must stir up themselves to do it, and strengthen themselves for it. Being strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus may be understood,

1. In opposition to the weakness of grace. Where there is the truth of grace, there must be a labouring after the strength of grace. As our trials increase we had need to grow stronger and stronger in that which is good. Our faith stronger, our resolution stronger, our love to God and Christ stronger.

2. In opposition to our being strong in our own strength. Be strong, not confiding in thy own sufficiency, but in the grace that is in Jesus Christ. Compare, *Eph. vi. 10.* Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. When Peter promised rather to die for Christ, than to deny him; he was strong in his own strength; had he been strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, he had kept his standing better.

1. There is grace in Christ Jesus, for the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ, *John i. 17.* There is grace enough in him for all of us. 2. We must be strong in this grace, not in ourselves in our own strength, or in the grace we have already received, but in the grace that is in him, and that is the way to be strong in grace. 3. As a father exhorts his son, so doth St. Paul exhort Timothy with great tenderness and affections, thou therefore my son, &c.

Timothy must count upon sufferings, even unto blood, and therefore,

1. He must train up others to succeed him in the ministry of the gospel, *ver. 2.* 1. He must instruct others and train them up for the ministry; and so commit to them the things which he had heard. 2. He must ordain them to the ministry, lodge the gospel as a trust in their hands, and so commit to them the things which he had heard. Two things he must have an eye to in ordaining ministers.

1. Their fidelity and integrity, commit them to faithful men, that will sincerely aim at the glory of God, the honour of Christ, the welfare of souls, and the advancement of the kingdom of the Redeemer among men.

2. Their ministerial ability. They must not only be knowing themselves, but be able to teach others also, and be apt to teach.

Here we have, 1. The things Timothy was to commit to others; what he had heard of the apostle among many witnesses; he must not deliver any thing besides, and what St. Paul delivered to him and others, he had received of the Lord Jesus Christ. 2. He was to commit them as a trust, as a sacred depositum, which they are to keep, and to transmit pure and uncorrupt unto others. 3. Those to whom he was to commit these things, must be faithful, i. e. trusty men, and who were skilful to teach others. 4. Though men were both faithful and able to teach others, yet these things must be committed to them by Timothy a minister, a man in office; for none must intrude themselves into the ministry, but must have these things committed to them by those already in that office.

2. He must endure hardness, *ver. 3.* Thou therefore, &c. 1. All Christians, but especially ministers, are soldiers of Jesus Christ, they fight under his banner, in his cause, and against his enemies, for he is the captain of our salvation, *Heb. ii. 10.*

2. The soldier of Jesus Christ must approve themselves, good soldiers; faithful to their captain, resolute in his cause, and must not give over fighting till they are made more than conquerors, through him that loved them, *Rom. viii. 37.*

3. Those that would approve themselves good soldiers of Jesus Christ, must endure hardness, i. e. we must expect it, and count

count upon it in this world; must endure and accustom ourselves to it, and bear it patiently when it comes, and not be moved by it from our integrity.

3. He must not entangle himself in the affairs of this world, *ver. 4.* A soldier, when he is lifted, leaves his calling, and all the business of it, that he may attend his captain's orders. If we have given up ourselves to be Christ's soldiers, we must sit loose to this world, and though there is no remedy, but we must employ ourselves in the affairs of this life, while we are here; we have something to do here; yet we must not entangle ourselves with those affairs, so as by them to be diverted, and drawn aside from our duty to God, and the great concerns of our Christianity. They that will war the good warfare, must sit loose to this world, *that we may please him who hath chosen us to be soldiers.* Observe, The great care of a soldier should be to please his general; so the great care of a Christian should be to please Christ, to approve ourselves to him.

Observe farther, The way to please him, who hath chosen us to be soldiers, is not to entangle ourselves with the affairs of this life, but to be free from such entanglements as would hinder us in our holy warfare.

4. We must see to it that in warring our spiritual warfare we go by rule; we observe the laws of war, *ver. 5.* *If a man strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully.* We are striving for mastery, to get the mastery of our lusts and corruptions, to excel in that which is good, but we cannot expect the prize unless we observe the laws. In doing that which is good, we must take care that we do it in a right manner, that our good may not be evil spoken of.

We observe here, 1. A Christian is to strive for masteries, he must aim at mastering his own lusts and corruptions. 2. Yet he must strive according to the laws given to him, he must strive lawfully. 3. Those that do so, shall be crowned at last, after a complete victory is obtained.

5. We must be willing to wait for a recompence, *ver. 6.* *The husbandman that laboureth, must be first partaker of the fruits.* Or, as it should be read, The husbandman labouring, first must partake of the fruits, as appears by comparing it with *Jam. v. 7.* If we would be partakers of the fruits, we must labour; if we would gain the prize, we must run the race.

And farther we must first labour as the husbandman doth with diligence and patience, before we are partakers of the fruit; we must do the will of God, before we receive the promises, for which reason we have need of patience, *Heb. x. 36.*

Ver. 7. Consider what I say, and the Lord give thee understanding in all things. Here,

1. Paul commands Timothy to *consider these things* that he admonished him about. Timothy must be minded to use his considering faculties about the things of God. Consideration is as necessary to a good conversation, as to a sound conversion.

2. He prays for him, *the Lord give thee understanding* in all things. Observe, That it is God that gives understanding. The most intelligent men need more and more of this gift. If he that gave the revelation in the word, doth not give the understanding in the heart, we are nothing.

And together with our prayers for others, that the Lord would give them understanding in all things; we must exhort and stir them up to consider what we say, for consideration is the way to understand, remember and practise what we hear or read.

8. Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead, according to my gospel: 9. Wherein I suffer trouble as an evil doer, *even* unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound. 10. Therefore I endure all things for the elects sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory. 11. *It is* a faithful saying: for if we be dead *with him*, we shall also live *with him*: 12. If we suffer, we shall also reign *with him*: if we deny *him*, he also will deny us: 13. If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful; he cannot deny himself.

To encourage Timothy in suffering, the apostle puts him in mind of the resurrection of Christ. *Ver. 8. Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel.* This is the great proof of his divine mission, and therefore a great confirmation of the truth of the Christian religion, and the consideration of it should make us faithful to our Christian profession, and should particularly encourage us in suffering for it. Let suffering saints remember this.

Observe, We are to look to Jesus the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despised the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of the throne of God, *Heb. xii. 2.* The incarnation and resurrection of Jesus Christ, heartily believed and rightly considered, will support a Christian under all sufferings in the present life.

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2. Another thing to encourage him in sufferings was, that he had Paul for an example, *ver. 9. wherein I suffer trouble as an evil doer*, and let not Timothy the son expect any better treatment than Paul the father. Paul was a man that did good, and yet suffered as an evil doer; we must not think it strange if those that do well fare ill in this world, and if the best of men, meet with the worst of treatment, but this was his comfort, that *the word of God is not bound.* Persecuting powers may silence ministers and restrain them, but they cannot hinder the operation of the word of God upon mens hearts and consciences; that cannot be bound by any human force. This might encourage Timothy not to be afraid of bonds for the testimony of Jesus; for the word of Christ which ought to be dearer to him than liberty, or life itself, should in the issue suffer nothing by those bonds.

Here we see, 1. The good apostle's treatment in the world. I suffer trouble, to this he was called and appointed. 2. The pretence and colour under which he suffered. I suffer as an evil doer, so the Jews said to Pilate, concerning Christ, if he was not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up to thee, *John xviii. 30.* 3. The real and true cause of his suffering trouble as an evil doer, wherein, *i. e.* in or for the sake of the gospel. 4. The apostle suffered trouble unto bonds, and afterwards he resisted unto blood, striving against sin, *Heb. xii. 2.* Though the preachers of the word are often bound, yet the word is never bound.

Ver. 10. I endure all things for the elects sake. Observe, That good ministers may and should encourage themselves in the hardest services, and the hardest sufferings with this, that God will certainly bring good to his church, and benefit to his elect out of them, *That they may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus.* Next to the salvation of our own souls we should be willing to do and suffer any thing, to promote the salvation of the souls of others.

Observe farther, The elect are designed to obtain salvation; God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation, *1 Thes. v. 9.* Again, this salvation is in Christ Jesus, in him as the fountain, the purchaser and giver of it, and it is accompanied with eternal glory; there is no salvation in Christ Jesus without it. Lastly, the sufferings of our apostle, were for the elects sake, for their confirmation and encouragement.

3. Another thing with which he encourages Timothy is, the prospect of a future state.

1. Those that faithfully adhere to Christ and to his truths and ways, whatever it costs them, will certainly have the advantage of it in another world. *If we be dead with him, we shall live with him, ver. 11.* If in conformity to Christ we be dead to this world, and the pleasures, profits and honours of it, we shall go to live with him in a better world, to be for ever with him. Nay, though we be called out to suffer for him, we shall not lose by that. They that *suffer for Christ* on earth, shall reign with Christ in heaven, *ver. 12.* That they suffered with David in his humiliation, were preferred with him in his exaltation: So it will be with the son of David.

2. It is at our peril if we prove unfaithful to him. *If we deny him, he also will deny us.* If we deny him before man, he will deny us before his Father, *Matt. x. 33.* And that man must needs be for ever miserable, whom Christ disowns at last.

This will certainly be the issue, whether we believe it or no, *ver. 13. If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful; he cannot deny himself.* Faithful to his threatnings, faithful to his promises, neither one nor the other shall fall to the ground, no not the least jot or tittle of them. If we be faithful to Christ, he will certainly be faithful to us. If we be false to him, he will be faithful to his threatnings; *he cannot deny himself*, cannot recede from any word that he hath spoken, for he is yea, and amen, the faithful witness.

Observe, 1. Our being dead with Christ precedes our living with him, and is connected with it, and the one is in order to the other, so our suffering for him is the way to reign with him. You that have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel, *Matt. xix. 28.* 2. This is a faithful saying, and may be depended on, and ought to be believed. But, 3. If we deny him out of fear, or shame, or for the sake of some temporal advantage, he will deny and disown us, and will not deny himself, but will continue faithful to his word when he threatens, as well as when he promises.

14. Of these things put *them* in remembrance, charging *them* before the Lord, that they strive not about words, to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers. 15. Study to shew thy self approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. 16. But shun profane and vain babblings, for they will increase unto more ungodliness. 17. And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymeneus and Philetus; 18. Who concerning the truth hath erred, saying that the resurrection

rection is past already, and overthrow the faith of some.

Having thus encouraged Timothy to suffer, he comes, in the next place, to direct him in his work.

1. He must make it his business to edify those that were under his charge, *to put them in remembrance* of those things which they did already know, for that is the work of ministers, not to tell people that which they never knew before, but to put them in mind of that which they do know, *charging them that they strive not about words*. Observe, Those that are disposed to strive, commonly strive about matters of very small moment. Strifes of words are very destructive to the things of God. That they strive not about words *to no profit*. If people did but consider of what little use most of the controversies in religion are, they would not be so zealous in their strifes of words, *to the subverting of the hearers*, to the drawing them away from the great things of God, and occasioning unchristian heats and animosities, by which truth is often in danger of being lost.

Observe, People are very prone to strive about words, and such strife never answers any other ends but to shake some, and subvert others; they are not only useless, but they are very hurtful, and therefore ministers are to charge them that they do not strive about words, and then they are most likely to be regarded, when they charge them before the Lord, *i. e.* in his name and from his word, when they produce their warrant for what they say.

Ver. 15. Study to shew thyself approved unto God. Observe, The care of ministers must be to approve themselves unto God, and to be accepted of him, and to shew that they are so approved unto God. In order thereunto there must be constant care and industry; *study to shew thyself such a one, a workman that needs not be ashamed*. Ministers must be *workmen*, they have work to do, and they must take pains in it; *workmen* that are either unskillful or unfaithful, or lazy, have *need to be ashamed*, but those that mind their business, and keep to their work are workmen, that need not be ashamed. And what is their work? It is *rightly to divide the word of truth*: Not to invent a new gospel, but rightly to divide the gospel that is committed to their trust. To speak terror to those to whom terror belongs, comfort to whom comfort; to give to every one *their portion in due season*, Matt. xxiv. 45.

Observe here, 1. The word which ministers preach, is the word of truth, for the author of it is the God of truth. 2. It requires great wisdom, study, and care, to divide this word of truth rightly; Timothy must study in order to do this well.

2. He must take heed of that which would be a hinderance to him in his work, *ver. 16*.

1. He must take heed of error, *shun profane and vain babblings*. The hereticks that boasted of their notions and their arguments, thought their performances such as might recommend themselves, but the apostle calls them *profane and vain babblings*. And when once men take to be fond of such, they will increase unto more ungodliness. The way of error is down-hill, one absurdity being granted or contended for, a thousand follow. *Their word will eat as doth a canker or gangrene*, *i. e.* when errors or heresies come into the church, the infecting of one, often proves the infecting of many, or the infecting of the same person with one error, often proves the infecting of him with many errors. Upon this occasion the apostle instances in some that had lately advanced erroneous doctrines. *Hymeneus and Philetus*. He names these corrupt teachers by which he sets a brand upon them, to their perpetual infamy, and warns all people against hearkening to them; they have *erred concerning the truth*, *i. e.* concerning one of the fundamental articles of the Christian religion, which is *truth*. The resurrection of the dead, is one of the great doctrines of Christ. Now see the subtilty of the serpent, and the serpent's seed. They did not deny the resurrection, for that had been boldly and avowedly to confront the word of Christ, but they put a corrupt interpretation upon that true doctrine, saying, that the resurrection is *to be understood mystically*, and by way of allegory, that it must be meant of a spiritual resurrection only. It is true there is a spiritual resurrection, but from thence to infer that there will not be a true and real resurrection of the body at the last day, is to dash one truth of Christ in pieces against another. By this they *overthrew the faith of some*, *i. e.* took them off from the belief of the resurrection of the dead, and if there be no resurrection of the dead, no future state, no recompence of our services and sufferings in another world, we are of all men the most miserable, 1 Cor. xv. 19. What takes away the doctrine of a future state, overthrows the faith of Christians. The apostle had largely disproved this error, 1 Cor. xv. and therefore doth not here enter into the arguments against it.

1. The babblings Timothy was to shun, were profane and vain, they were empty shadows, and left to profaneness, *for they will increase unto more ungodliness*. 2. Error is very fruitful and productive, and on that account the more dangerous, it will eat like a gangrene. 3. When men err concerning the *truth*, they always endeavour to have some plausible pretence for it; Hymeneus and Philetus did not deny a resurrection, but pretended it

was already past. 4. Error, especially that affects the foundation, will overthrow the faith of some.

19. Nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity. 20. But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold, and of silver, but also of wood, and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. 21. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.

Here we see what we may comfort ourselves with in reference to this, and the little errors and heresies that both infect and infest the church, and do mischief.

1. It may be a great comfort to us, that the unbelief of men, cannot make the promise of God of none effect. Though the faith of some particular persons be overthrown, yet *the foundation of God standeth sure*, ver. 19. it is not possible they should deceive the elect. Or, it may be meant of the truth itself which they do impugn. All the attacks which the powers of darkness have made upon the doctrine of Christ, cannot shake it, it stands firm, and weathers all the storms which have been raised against it. The prophets and apostles, *i. e.* the doctrine of the Old and New Testament is still firm, and this hath a seal with two mottoes upon it, one on the one side, and the other on the other, as is usual in a broad seal.

1. One speaks our comfort, that the *Lord knows them that are his*, and them that are not; knows them, that is, he owns them, so knows them that he will never lose them. Though the faith of some be overthrown, yet the Lord is said to know the ways of the righteous, *Psal. i. 6*. yet not the faith of any whom God hath chosen.

2. Another speaks our duty, that every one that names the name of Christ, must depart from iniquity. Those that would have the comfort of the privilege, must make conscience of the duty. If the name of Christ be called upon us, we must depart from iniquity, else he will not own us; he will tell us in the great day, *Matth. vii. 22. Depart from me, I never knew you, ye workers of iniquity*.

Observe, 1. Whatever errors are introduced in the church, the foundation of God standeth sure, his purpose can never be defeated. 2. God hath some in the church which are his, and which he knows to be his. 3. Professing Christians name the name of Christ, are called by his name, and therefore are bound to depart from iniquity, for Christ gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, *Tit. ii. 1, 4*.

2. Another thing that may comfort us is, that though there be some whose faith is overthrown, yet there are others who keep their integrity, and hold it fast, *ver. 20. In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, &c.* The church of Christ is a great house, a well furnished house; now the furniture of this house is some of it of great value, as the plate in a house; others of small value, and put to mean uses, as the vessels of wood and earth; so it is in the church of God. There are some professors of religion, that are like the vessels of wood and earth, they are vessels of dishonour; but at the same time all are not vessels of dishonour, there are *vessels of gold and silver*, that are vessels of honour, *that are sanctified, and meet for the master's use*. When we are discouraged by the badness of some, we must encourage ourselves by the consideration of the goodness of others. Now we should see to it that we be vessels of honour: we must *purge ourselves from these corrupt opinions*, that we may be sanctified for our master's use.

1. Observe, In the church there are some vessels of honour, and some of dishonour; there are some vessels of mercy, and other vessels of wrath, *Rom. ix. 22, 23*. Some dishonour the church by their corrupt opinions and wicked lives. And others honour and credit it by their exemplary conversation. 2. A man must purge himself from these, before he can be a vessel of honour, or meet for his master's use. 3. Every vessel must be fit for his master's use, every one in the church whom God approves, must be devoted to his master's service, and meet for his use.

Observe, 4. Sanctification in the heart is our preparation for every good work. The tree must be made good, and then the fruit will be good.

22. Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. 23. But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes. 24. And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, 25. In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; 26. And that they may recover

recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.

Timothy must take care of *youthful lusts*, ver. 22. though he was a holy good man, very much mortified to the world, yet Paul thought it necessary to caution him against youthful lusts, *see* them, take all possible care and pains to keep thyself pure from them. The lusts of the flesh are youthful lusts, which young people must carefully watch against, and the best must not be secure. He prescribes an excellent remedy against youthful lusts, *follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, &c.*

Observe, 1. Youthful lusts are very dangerous, for which reason even hopeful young people should be warned of them, for they war against the soul, 1 *Pet.* ii. 11. 2. That the exciting of our graces will be the extinguishing of our corruptions, the more we follow that which is good, the faster and the further we shall flee from that which is evil. Righteousness, and faith, and love, will be excellent antidotes against youthful lusts. Holy love will cure impure lust. Follow peace with them that call on the Lord. The keeping up of the communion of saints, will take us off from all fellowship with unfruitful works of darkness. See the character of Christians, they are such as *call on the Lord Jesus Christ, out of a pure heart*. Observe, Christ is to be prayed to. It is the character of all Christians that they call upon him; but our prayers to God and Christ, are not acceptable or successful, except they come out of a pure heart.

2. He cautions him against contention, and to prevent that, ver. 23. cautions him against *foolish and unlearned questions*, that tend to no benefit, strifes of words. They that advanced them, and doted upon them, thought themselves wise and learned, but Paul calls them foolish and unlearned. The mischief of these is, that they do *gender strifes*, i. e. that they breed debates and quarrels among Christians and ministers. It is very remarkable how often, and with what seriousness the apostle cautions Timothy against the disputes in religion, which surely was not without some such design as this, to shew us that religion consisteth more in believing and practising what God requires, than in subtle disputes.

Now *the servant of the Lord must not strive*, ver. 24. Nothing worse becomes the servant of the Lord Jesus, who himself did not strive nor cry, *Matt.* xii. 19. but was himself a pattern of meekness and mildness, and gentleness to all, than strife, contention.

The servant of the Lord must be *gentle to all men*, and thereby shew that he is himself subject to the commanding power of that holy religion which he is employed in, preaching and propagating; apt to teach. Those are unapt to teach, that are apt to strive, and are fierce and froward. Ministers must be patient, bearing with evil, and *in meekness instructing*, ver. 25. not only those that are subject themselves, but those that oppose themselves.

Observe, 1. Those that oppose themselves to the truth are to be instructed, for instruction is the scripture-method of dealing with the erroneous, that is more likely to convince them of their errors than fire and faggot; he does not bid us kill their bodies, under pretence of saving their souls. 2. Such who oppose themselves, are to be instructed in meekness, for our Lord is meek and lowly, *Matt.* xi. 29. and this agrees well with the character of the servant of the Lord, ver. 24. *He must not strive, but be gentle to all men, apt to teach, patient.*

This is the way to convey truth in its light and power, and to overcome evil with good, *Rom.* xii. 21. And that which ministers must have in their eye, in instructing those that oppose themselves must be their recovery. *If God, peradventure, will give them acceptance to the acknowledging of the truth.*

Observe, 1. That repentance is God's gift. 2. It is a gift with a peradventure, in the case of those that oppose themselves, and therefore, though we are not to despair of the grace of God, yet we must take heed of presuming upon it. *To the acknowledging of the truth.* Observe, 3. The same God who gives us the discovery of the truth, doth, by his grace, bring us to the acknowledging of it, otherwise our hearts would continue in rebellion against it, for we are to confess with our mouths, as well as to believe with our hearts, *Rom.* xiii. 9, 10. And thus sinners recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, see here ver. 26.

1. The misery of sinners, they are in the *snare of the devil, and are led captive by him at his will*. They are slaves to the worst of task-masters, he is the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience, *Eph.* ii. 2.

They are taken in a snare, and in the worst snare, because it is the devil, they are as fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare: Further, they are under Ham's curse, a servant of servants shall he be, *Gen.* ii. 25. they are slaves to him who is but a slave and vassal.

2. The happiness of those that repent; they recover themselves out of this snare, as a bird out of the snare of the fowler, the snare is broken and they have escaped, and the greater the danger, the greater the deliverance. When sinners repent, they who before were led captive by the devil at his will, come to be led into the glorious liberty of the children of God, and have

their wills melted into the will of the Lord Jesus. The good Lord recover us all out of the snare.

C H A P. III.

He foretels Timothy what the last days would be, with the reasons thereof, ver. 1—9. 2. Prescribes various remedies against them, ver. 10, ad fin. particularly his own examples, but thou hast fully known my doctrine, &c. and the knowledge of the holy scriptures, which are able to make us wise unto salvation, and will be the best antidote against the corruptions of the times we live in. In this chapter Paul tells Timothy how bad others would be, and therefore how good he should be; and this use we should make of the badness of others, thereby to engage us to hold our own integrity so much the faster.

1. **T**HIS know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. 2. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, 3. Without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, 4. Traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; 5. Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.

Timothy must not think it strange if there were in the church bad men, for the net of the gospel was to inclose both good fish and bad, *Matt.* xiii. 47, 48. Jesus Christ had foretold it, *Matt.* xxiv. that there would come seducers, and therefore we must not be offended at it, nor think the worse of religion, or the church for it.

Even in gold ore there will be dross, and a great deal of chaff among the wheat when it lies on the floor, Timothy must know that in the *last days*, ver. 1. i. e. in gospel-times there would come *perilous times*. Though gospel-times, were times of reformation in many respects, let him know that even in gospel-times there would be perilous times, not so much on the account of persecution from without, as on the account of corruptions within. These would be difficult times, wherein it would be difficult for a man to keep a good conscience. He doth not say *perilous times shall come*, for both Jews and Gentiles shall be combined to root out Christianity; but *perilous times shall come* for such who have *the form of godliness*, ver. 5. shall be corrupt and wicked, and do a great deal of damage to the church. Two traitors within the garrison, may do more hurt than two thousand besiegers without. Perilous times shall come, for men shall be wicked. Note, Sin makes the times perilous. When there is a general corruption of manners, and of the tempers of men, that makes the times dangerous to live, for it is hard to keep our integrity in the midst of general corruption.

2. The coming of perilous times is an evidence of the truth of scripture predictions, if the event in this respect did not answer the prophecy, we might be tempted to question the divinity of the bible. 3. We are all concerned to know this, to believe and consider it, that we may not be surprised, when we see the times perilous, *this know also*.

Then he tells Timothy what would be the occasion of making these times perilous, or what shall be the marks and signs, whereby these times may be known, ver. 2. and following verses.

1. Self-love will make the times perilous. Who is there that doth not love himself, but this is meant of an irregular, sinful, self-love. Men love their carnal selves, better than their spiritual selves. Men love to gratify their own lusts, and make provision for them more than to please God, and do their duty. Instead of Christian charity that takes care for the good of others, they will mind themselves only, and prefer their own qualification before the church's edification.

2. Covetousness. Observe, Self-love brings in a long train of sins and mischiefs. When men are lovers of themselves, no good can be expected from them, as all good may be expected from those that love God with all their hearts. When covetousness generally prevails, and every man is for what he can get, and keeping what he hath, this makes men dangerous to one another, and obliges every man to stand on his guard against his neighbour.

3. Pride and vain-glory makes the times perilous. When men, being *proud* of themselves, are *boasters and blasphemers*, boasters before men whom they despise and look upon with scorn, and *blasphemers* of God, and of his name when men do not fear God, they will not regard man, and to *vice versa*.

4. When children are disobedient to their parents, and break through the obligations which they lie under to them both in duty and gratitude, and frequently in interest, having their dependence upon them, and their expectation from them, that makes the times perilous, for what wickedness will they stick at,

at, that will be abusive to their own parents, and rebel against them?

5. Unthankfulness and unholiness make the times perilous, and those two commonly go together. What is the reason that men are unholy and without the fear of God, but that they are unthankful for the mercies of God? Ingratitude and impiety go together, for call a man ungrateful, and you can call him by no worse name. Unthankful, and impure, defiled with fleshly lusts, which is an instance of great ingratitude to that God who hath provided so well for the support of the body, but we abuse his gifts, if we make them the food and fuel of our lusts.

6. The times are perilous when men will not be held by the bonds either of nature, or common honesty, *when they are without natural affection, and truce-breakers*, ver. 3. There is a natural affection due to all. Wherever there is the human nature, there should be humanity towards those of the same nature, but especially between relations. Times are perilous, when children are disobedient to their parents, ver. 2. and when parents are without natural affection to their children, ver. 3. See what a corruption of nature sin is, how it deprives men even of that which nature hath implanted in them, for the support of their own kind; for the natural affection of parents to their children, is that which contributes very much to the keeping up of mankind upon the earth. And those that will not be bound by natural affection, no marvel they will not be bound by the most solemn leagues and covenants. *They are truce-breakers* that make no conscience of the engagements they have laid themselves under. Again, the times are perilous, when men are *false accusers* one of another, διαβόλοι. devils one to another, no regard had to the good name of others, nor to the religious obligations of an oath, but think themselves at liberty to say and do what they please, *Psal. xii. 4.*

7. When men have no government of themselves and their own appetites. Not of their own appetites, for they are *incontinent*. Not of their own passions, for they are fierce. Have no rule over their own spirits, and therefore are like a city that is broken down and hath no walls; they are soon fired upon the least provocation.

8. When that which is good and ought to be honoured, is generally despised and looked upon with contempt. It is the pride of persecutors that they look with contempt upon good people, though they are more excellent than their neighbours.

9. When men are generally treacherous, wilful and haughty, the times are perilous, ver. 4. when men are *traitors, heady, high-minded*. Our Saviour hath foretold that the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son, *Matt. x. 21.* And those are the worst sort of traitors, those that delivered up their bibles to persecutors, were called *traditors* for they betrayed the trust committed to them. When men are petulant and puffed up, carrying it scornfully to all about them, and when this temper generally prevails, then the times are perilous.

10. When men are generally *lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God*. When there are more epicures than true Christians, then the times are bad indeed. God is to be loved above all; that is a carnal mind, and is full of enmity against him, which prefers any thing before him, especially such a sordid thing as carnal pleasure is.

11. All this notwithstanding, *all these have the form of godliness*, ver. 5. *i. e.* are called by the Christian name, baptized into the Christian faith, make a shew of religion, but how plausible soever their form of godliness is, they deny the power of it. When they take upon them the form, which should and would bring along with it the power thereof, they will put asunder what God hath joined together: They will assume the form of godliness to take away their reproach, but they will not submit to the power of it to take away their sin.

Observe here, 1. Men may be very bad and wicked, under a profession of religion; they may be lovers of themselves, &c. yet have a form of godliness. 2. A form of godliness is a very different thing from the power of it, men may have the one, and be wholly destitute of the other; yea, they deny it, at least, practically in their lives. 3. From such, good Christians must withdraw themselves.

6. For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, 7. Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. 8. Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. 9. But they shall proceed no further, for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was.

Here Paul warns Timothy to take heed of certain seducers, not only that he might not be drawn away by them himself, but that he might arm those that were under his charge against their seduction.

1. He shews how industrious they were to make profelytes, ver. 6. they applied themselves to particular persons, visited them in their houses, not daring to appear openly, for they that do evil hate the light, *Jahn iii. 20.* they were not forced into houses as good Christians often were by persecution, but they of choice crept into houses to insinuate themselves into the affections, and good opinion of people, and so to draw them over to their party. And see what sort of people they were that they gained and made *profelytes* of; they were such as were weak, *silly women*; and such as were wicked, *laden with sins, and led away with divers lusts*, a foolish head, and a filthy heart makes persons, especially women, an easy prey to seducers.

2. He shews how far they were from coming to the knowledge of the truth, though they pretend to be *ever learning*, ver. 7. In one sense we must all be ever learning, *i. e.* growing in knowledge, following on to know the Lord, pressing forwards, but these were scepticks, giddy and unstable, that were forward to imbibe every new motion, under pretence of advancement in knowledge, but never come to a right understanding of the truth as it is in Jesus.

3. He foretels the certain stop that should be put to their progress, ver. 8, 9. comparing them to the Egyptian magicians that withstood Moses, they are here named Jannes and Jambres, though the names are not to be met with in the story of the Old Testament, yet they are found in some old Jewish writers. Moses came with a divine commission to fetch Israel out of Egypt, these magicians opposed him, and thus those hereticks *resisted the truth*, and like them were men of *corrupt minds*. Men that had their understandings perverted, biased and prejudiced against the truth, and *reprobate concerning the faith*, *i. e.* very far from being true Christians; *but they shall proceed no farther*, or not much further, as some read it.

Observe, 1. Seducers seek for corners, and love obscurity, for they are afraid to appear in publick, and therefore creep into houses. Further, they attack those that are the least able to defend themselves; they are silly and wicked women. 2. Seducers in all ages are much alike, their characters are the same, *men of corrupt minds*, &c. and their conduct much the same, they resist the truth, as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, and they will be alike in their disappointment.

3. Those that resist the truth, are guilty of folly, yea, of egregious folly, for *magna est veritas & praevalabit*.

4. Though the spirit of error may be let loose for a time, God hath it in a chain. Satan can deceive the nation and the churches no farther, nor no longer than God will permit him, *their folly shall be manifest*, *i. e.* it shall appear that they are impostors, and every man shall abandon them.

10. But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience, 11. Persecutions, afflictions which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra: what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me. 12. Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution. 13. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.

Here the apostle to confirm Timothy in that way, wherein he walked.

(1.) Sets before him his own example which Timothy had been an eye-witness of, having long attended Paul, ver. 10. *thou hast fully known my doctrine*. The more fully we know the doctrine of Christ and the apostles, the more closely we shall cleave to it, and the reason why many sit loose to it is, because they do not fully know it. Christ's apostles had no enemies but those that did not know them, or not know them fully; those that knew them best, loved and honoured them the most. Now what is it that Timothy had so fully known in Paul?

1. The doctrine that he preached. Paul kept back nothing from his hearers, but declared to them the whole counsel of God, *Acts xx. 27.* so that if it were not their own fault, they might fully know it. Timothy had a great advantage in being trained up under such a tutor, and being apprised of the doctrine he preached.

2. He had fully known his *conversation*, thou hast known my doctrine, and *manner of life*, and his manner of life was of a piece with his doctrine, and did not contradict it. He did not pull down by his living what he built up his preaching. Those ministers are likely to do good, and leave lasting fruits of their labours, whose manner of life agrees with their doctrine, as on the contrary those cannot expect to profit the people at all, that preach well and live ill.

3. Timothy fully knew what was the great thing, that Paul drove at both in his preaching, and in his conversation. Thou hast known *my purpose*, *i. e.* what I drive at, how far it is from any worldly, carnal, secular design, and how sincerely I aim at the glory of God and the good of the souls of men,

4. Timothy fully knew Paul's good character, which he might gather from his doctrine, manner of life, and purpose; for he gave

ave proofs of his faith, *i. e.* of his integrity and fidelity, or, his faith in Christ, his faith concerning another world, by which Paul lived, his *long suffering* towards the churches to which he preached, and over which he presided, his charity towards all men, and his patience. These were graces that Paul was eminent for, and Timothy knew it.

5. He knew that he had suffered ill for doing well, *ver. 11.* Thou hast fully known the *persecutions and afflictions that came unto me.* He instances in those only, which happened to him, while Timothy was with him, *at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra,* and therefore let it be no surprize to thee, if thou suffer hard things, it is no more than I have endured before.

6. He knew what care God hath taken of him, notwithstanding, *out of them all the Lord delivered me,* as he never failed his cause, so his God never failed him. Thou hast fully known my *afflictions.* When we know the afflictions of good people but in part, they are a temptation to us to decline that cause which they suffer for, when we only know the hardships they undergo for Christ, we may be ready to say, we will bless us from that cause that is like to cost us so dear in the owning of it, but when we fully know the afflictions, not only how they suffer, but how they are supported and comforted under their sufferings, then instead of being discouraged, we shall be encouraged by them, especially considering that we are told before, that we must count upon such things, *ver. 12.* *All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.* Not always alike; at that time they that professed the faith of Christ were more exposed to persecution than at other times, but at all times more or less, they that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. They must expect to be despised, and that their religion will stand in the way of their preferment, they that will live godly, must expect it, especially they that will live godly *in Christ Jesus,* *i. e.* according to the strict rules of the Christian religion, will wear the livery and bear the name of the crucified Redeemer; all that will shew their religion in their conversation, that will not only be godly but live godly, let them expect persecution, especially when they are resolute in it.

1. The apostle's life was very exemplary for three things, for his doctrine, which was according to the will of God, for his life which was agreeable to his doctrine, and for his persecutions and sufferings. 2. Though his life was a life of great usefulness, yet it was a life of great sufferings, and none I believe came nearer to their great Master for eminent service and great sufferings than St. Paul; he suffered almost in every place, the Holy Ghost witnessed that bonds and afflictions did abide him, *Acts xx. 23.* Here he mentions his persecutions and afflictions at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra, besides what he suffered elsewhere. 3. The apostle mentions the Lord's delivering him out of all for Timothy's and our encouragement under sufferings. 4. We have the practice and treatment of true Christians, they live godly in Jesus Christ, that is their practice, and they shall suffer persecution, that is the usage they must expect in this world.

(2.) He warns Timothy of the fatal end of seducers as a reason why he should stick close to the truth as it is in Jesus. *ver. 13.* *but evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, &c.* Observe, That as good men by the grace of God grow better and better, so bad men through the subtilty of Satan, and the power of their own corruptions, grow worse and worse. The way of sin is down-hill, for such proceed from bad to worse, *deceiving and being deceived.* Those that deceive others, do but deceive themselves, that draw others into error, run themselves into more and more mistakes, and they will find it so at last to their cost.

14. But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned, and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned *them:* 15. And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 16. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 17. That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

He directs him to keep close to a good education, and particularly to what he had learned out of the holy scriptures, *ver. 14, 15.* *Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned.* Note, It is not enough to learn that which is good, but we must continue in it, and persevere in it unto the end. *Then are we Christ's disciples indeed,* John viii. 33.

We should not be any more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive. *Ephes. iv. 14.* Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines; for it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace, *Heb. xiii. 9.* and for this reason we should continue in the things we have learned from the holy scriptures; not that we ought to continue in any errors, and mistakes which we may have

been led into, in the time of our childhood and youth, for these upon an impartial enquiry and full conviction we should forsake; but this makes nothing against our continuing in those things the holy scriptures plainly assert, and which he that runs may read.

If Timothy would stick to the truth as he had been taught it, that would arm him against the snares and insinuations of seducers. They are *the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of.* It is a great happiness to know the *certainly* of the things *wherein we have been instructed,* Luke i. 4. Not only to know what the truths are, but to know that they are of undoubted certainty. What we have learned we must labour to be more and more assured of; that being grounded in the truth, we may be guarded against error, for certainty in religion is of great importance and advantage. *Knowing,*

1. That thou hast had good teachers, consider of *whom thou hast learned them;* not of evil men and seducers, but good men that had themselves experienced the power of the truths they taught thee, and been ready to suffer for them, and thereby would give the fullest evidence of their belief of these truths. 2. Knowing especially the firm foundation upon which thou hast built, namely, that of the scripture, *ver. 15.* *That from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures.*

Observe, Those that would acquaint themselves with the things of God, and be assured of them, must know the holy scriptures, for those are the summary of divine revelation. Observe, It is a great happiness to know the holy scriptures from our childhood: and children should betimes get the knowledge of the scriptures. The age of children is the learning age, and those that would get true learning, must get it out of the scriptures.

Observe further, the scriptures we are to know, are the holy scriptures, they came from the holy God, and were delivered by holy men, and contain holy precepts, and treat of holy things, and were designed to make us holy, and to lead us in the way of holiness to happiness; being called the holy scriptures; they are by that distinguished from profane writings of all sorts, and from those that only treat of morality, and common justice and honesty, but do not meddle with holiness. If we would know the holy scriptures, we must read and search them daily as the noble Bereans did, *Acts xvii. 11.* They must not lie by us neglected, and seldom or never looked into.

Now here observe, 1. What is the excellency of the scripture. It is *given by inspiration of God,* *ver. 16.* and therefore is his word. It is a divine revelation which we may depend upon as infallibly true. The same Spirit that breathed reason into us, breathes revelation among us.

For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men spake as they were moved or carried forth by the Holy Ghost, *2 Pet. i. 21.* The prophets and apostles did not speak from themselves, but what they received of the Lord, that they delivered unto us. That the scripture was given by inspiration of God, appears by the majesty of its stile, and the truth, purity, and sublimity of the doctrines contained in it, from the harmony of its several parts, from its power and efficacy on the minds of multitudes that converse with it, from the accomplishment of many prophecies relating to things beyond all human fore-sight, and from the uncontrollable miracles that were wrought in proof of its divine original, God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will, *Heb. ii. 4.*

2. What use it will be of to us.

1. It is able to make us wise to salvation, that is, It is a sure guide in our way to eternal life. Note, Those are wise indeed that are wise to salvation. The scriptures are able to make us truly wise, wise for our souls and another world; to make thee wise to salvation *through faith.* Observe, The scriptures will make us wise to salvation, if they be mixed with faith, and not otherwise, *Heb. iv. 2.* For if we do not believe their truth and goodness, they will do us no good.

2. It is profitable to us for all the purposes of the Christian life, *for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.* It answers all the ends of divine revelation. It instructs us in that which is true, reproves us for that which is amiss, directs us in that which is good. It is of use to all, for we all need to be instructed, corrected, and reprov'd: It is of special use to ministers, that are to give instruction, correction, and reproof, and whence can they fetch it better than from the scripture?

Ver. 17. *That the man of God may be perfect.* The Christian, the minister, is the man of God. That which finishes a man of God in this world is the scripture. By it we are *thoroughly furnished for every good work.* There is that in the scripture which suits every case. Whatever duty we have to do; whatever service is required from us, we may find enough in the scriptures to furnish us for it.

1. We see the scripture hath various uses, and answers divers ends, and purposes, it is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction of all errors in judgment and practice, and for instruction in righteousness. 2. The scripture is a perfect rule of faith and practice, and was designed for the man of God, the minister as well as the Christian who is devoted to God, for it is profitable

profitable for doctrine, &c. 3. If we consult the scripture that was given by inspiration of God, and follow its directions, we shall be made men of God, perfect and thoroughly furnished to every good work. 4. We further learn, there is no occasion for the writings of the philosophers, nor for rabbinical fables, nor popish legends, nor unwritten traditions to make us perfect men of God, since the scripture answers all these ends and purposes. Oh! that we may love our Bibles more, and keep closer to them than ever, and then shall we find the benefit and advantage designed thereby, and shall at last attain the happiness therein promised and assured to us.

C H A P. IV.

In this chapter St. Paul doth with great solemnity and earnestness press Timothy to the diligent and conscientious discharge of his work and office, as an evangelist; and the charge given to him, all gospel-ministers are to take to themselves, ver. 1—6. 2. The reason of his concern in this case, *Why must Timothy now be instant in season, &c. in a particular manner? because the church was likely to be deprived of the apostle's labours, for his departure was at hand*, ver. 6, 7, 8. 3. Divers particular matters, with an hint and caution about Alexander the coppersmith, ver. 9—16. 4. He informeth him of what befel him at his first answer, though men forsook him, the Lord stood by him, and that encouraged him to hope for future deliverance, ver. 16—19. And then he concludes with salutations, and a benediction, ver. 19, ad fin.

1. **I** Charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing, and his kingdom: 2. Preach the word, be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. 3. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears. 4. And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. 5. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. 6. For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. 7. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. 8. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

(1.) Observe how awfully this charge is introduced, ver. 1. *I charge thee before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing, and his kingdom.* Observe, The best of men have need to be awed into the discharge of their duty. The work of a minister is not an indifferent thing, but absolutely necessary. Wo be to him if he preach not the gospel, 1 Cor. ix. 16. *I charge thee*, to induce him to faithfulness, he must consider,

1. That the eye of God and Jesus Christ was upon him. *I charge thee before God and the Lord Jesus Christ*, i. e. as thou tenderest the favour of God and Jesus Christ; as thou wilt approve thyself to God and Jesus Christ, by the obligations both of natural and revealed religion; as thou wilt make due returns to the God that made thee, and the Lord Jesus Christ that redeemed thee.

2. He charges him as he will answer it at the great day: minding him of the judgment to come, which is committed to the Lord Jesus. He shall judge the quick and the dead, *at his appearing, and his kingdom*, i. e. when he appears in his kingdom. It concerns all, both ministers and people, seriously to consider the account that they must shortly give to Jesus Christ, of all the trusts reposed in them. Christ shall judge the quick and the dead, i. e. those that at the last day shall be found alive, and those that shall be raised to life out of the grave.

Note, 1. The Lord Jesus Christ shall judge the quick and dead; *God hath committed all judgment unto the Son*, and hath appointed him judge of quick and dead, Acts x. 42. 2. He will appear; he will come the second time, and it will be a glorious appearance, as the word *ἐπιφανεία* signifies. 3. Then his kingdom shall appear in his glory, *at his appearing, and kingdom*, for he will then appear in his kingdom, sitting on a throne to judge the world.

(2.) What is the matter of the charge, ver. 2—5. He is charged,

1. To preach the word. That is ministers business; a dispensation is committed to them. It is not their own notions and fancies that they are to preach, but the pure plain word of God, and they must not corrupt it, but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God they speak in Christ, 2 Cor. ii. 17.

2. To urge what he preached, and to press it with all earnestness upon his hearers, *Be instant in season, out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort*, i. e. do this work with all fervency of spirit. Call upon those under thy charge, to take heed of sin, to do their duty: Call upon them to repent and believe, and live a holy life, and this *both in season and out of season*. In season, i. e. when they are at leisure to hear thee; when some special opportunity offers itself of speaking to them with advantage. Nay, do it *out of season*, even when there is not that apparent probability of fastening something upon them, because thou dost not know but the Spirit of God may fasten upon them, for the wind bloweth where it listeth; and *in the morning we must sow our seed, and in the evening not withhold our hand*, Eccles. xi. 6.

We must do it *in season*, i. e. let slip no opportunity; and do it *out of season*, i. e. we must not shift off the duty, under pretence that it is out of season.

3. He must tell people of their faults, *reprove them, rebuke them*: Convince wicked people of the evil and danger of their wicked courses. Endeavour, by dealing plainly with them, to bring them to repentance. Rebuke them with gravity and authority, in Christ's name, that they may take thy displeasure against them, as an indication of God's displeasure.

4. He must direct, encourage, and quicken, those that began well. *Exhort them*; persuade them to hold on, and endure to the end, and this *with all long-suffering and doctrine*.

1. He must do it very patiently, *with all long-suffering*. If thou do not see the effect of thy labours presently, yet do not therefore give up the cause; be not weary of speaking to them, while God shews to them all long suffering; let ministers exhort with all long-suffering.

2. He must do it rationally, not with passion, but *with doctrine*, i. e. in order to the reducing of them to good practices, instil into them good principles. Teach them the truth, as it is in Jesus, and reduce them to a firm belief of that, and that will be a means both to reclaim them from evil, and to bring them to good.

Observe, 1. A minister's work hath various parts; he is to preach the word, to reprove, rebuke and exhort. 2. He is to be very diligent and careful; he must be instant in season and out of season; he must spare no pains nor labour, but must be urgent with them to take care of their souls, and their eternal concerns.

5. He must *watch in all things*, i. e. seek an opportunity of doing them a kindness; let no fair occasion slip through thy negligence. Watch to thy work; watch against the temptations of Satan, by which thou mayest be diverted from it; watch over the souls of those that are committed to thy charge.

6. He must count upon afflictions, and endure them; make the best of them. *Καταπόνησον*, endure *patiently*, be not discouraged by the difficulties thou meetest with, but bear them with an evenness of spirit. Enure thyself to hardships.

7. He must remember his office, and discharge that. *Do the work of an evangelist*. The office of the evangelists was, as the apostles deputies, to water the churches that they planted. They were not settled pastors, but for some time resided in, and presided over, the churches that the apostles had planted, till they were settled under a standing ministry. This was Timothy's work.

8. He must fulfil his ministry; *make full proof of it*. It was a great trust that was reposed in him, and therefore he must answer it, and perform all the parts of his office with diligence and care.

Observe, 1. A minister must expect afflictions in the faithful discharge of his duty. 2. He must endure them, i. e. bear them patiently like a Christian hero. 3. These must not discourage him in his work, for he must do his work, and fulfil his ministry. 4. The best way to make full proof of our ministry, is to fulfil it, to fill it up in all its parts with proper work.

(3.) The reasons to enforce the charge.

1. Because errors and heresies were likely to creep into the church, by which the minds of many professing Christians would be corrupted, ver. 3, 4. *For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine*: Therefore improve the present time, when they will endure it; be busy now, for it is seed-time, when the fields are white unto the harvest, put in the sickle, for the present gale of opportunity will be soon over. *They will not endure sound doctrine*. There will be those that will heap to themselves corrupt teachers, and will turn away their ears from the truth; and therefore secure as many as thou canst, that when these storms and tempests do arise, they may be well fixed, and their apostasy may be prevented. People must hear, and ministers must preach for the time to come, and guard against the mischiefs that are likely to arise hereafter, though they do not yet arise. They will turn away their ears from the truth, i. e. they will grow sick of the old plain gospel of Christ, and then they will be greedy of fables, and take pleasure in them, and God shall give them up to those strong delusions, because they received not the truth in the love of it, 2 Thess. ii. 11, 12.

Observe, 1. These teachers were of their own heaping up, and not of God's sending, but they chose them to gratify their lusts, and to please their itching ears. 2. People do so when they will not

not endure sound doctrine, that preaching which is searching, plain and to the purpose, then they will have teachers of their own. 3. There is a wide difference between the word of God, and the words of such teachers, the one is sound doctrine, the word of truth, the other is only fables. 4. They that are turned unto fables, first turn away their ears from the truth, for they cannot hear and mind both, no more than they can serve two masters: Nay, farther, it is said they shall be turned unto fables. God justly suffers them to turn to fables, who grow weary of the truth, and gives them up to be led aside from the truth by fables.

2. Because Paul for his part had almost done his work. Do thou make full proof of thy ministry, for I am now ready to be offered, ver. 6. And,

1. Therefore there will be the more occasion for thee. When labourers are removed out of the vineyard, it is no time for them to loiter that are left behind, but to double their diligence. The fewer hands there are to work, the more industrious those hands must be that are at work.

2. I have done the work of my day and generation, do thou in like manner do the work of thy day and generation.

3. The comfort and cheerfulness of Paul in the prospect of his approaching departure, might encourage Timothy to the utmost industry, and diligence and seriousness in his work. Paul was an old soldier of Jesus Christ, Timothy was but newly lifted. Come, saith Paul, I have found our master kind, the cause good, and I can look back upon my warfare with a great deal of pleasure and satisfaction, and therefore be not afraid of the difficulties thou must meet with. The crown of life is as sure to thee, as if it were already upon thy head, and therefore endure afflictions, and make full proof of thy ministry. The courage and comfort of dying saints and ministers, and especially dying martyrs, is a great confirmation of the truth of the Christian religion, and a great encouragement to living saints and ministers in their work. Here,

1. He looks forward upon his death approaching. *I am now ready to be offered.* The Holy Ghost witnessed in every city, that bonds and afflictions did abide him, *Acts xx. 23.* He was now at Rome, and it is probable he had particular intimations from the Spirit, that there he should seal the truth with his blood; and he looks upon it now as near at hand. *I am already poured out;* so it is in the original, *ἡδὴ σπένδομαι*, i. e. I am already a martyr in affection. It alludes to the pouring out of the drink-offerings; for the blood of the martyrs, though it was not a sacrifice of atonement, yet it was a sacrifice of acknowledgment to the honour of the grace of God and his truths. Observe, With what pleasure he speaks of dying. He calls it his *departure*; though it is probable he foresaw he must die a violent, bloody death, yet he calls it his departure, or his release. Death to a good man is his release from the imprisonment of this world, and his departure to the enjoyments of another world, he doth not cease to be, but is only removed from one world to another.

2. Observe with what pleasure he looks back upon the life he had lived, *ver. 7. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, &c.* He therefore did not fear death, because he had the testimony of his conscience, that by the grace of God he had in some measure answered the ends of living. As a Christian, as a minister, he had *fought the good fight.* He had done the service, gone through the difficulties of his warfare, and had been instrumental in carrying on the glorious victories of the exalted Redeemer over the powers of darkness. His life was *a course*, and he had now finished it; as his warfare was accomplished, so his race was run. *I have kept the faith.* I have kept the doctrines of the gospel, and never betrayed any of them.

Note, 1. The life of a Christian, but especially of a minister, is a warfare, and a race, sometimes compared to the one in the scripture, and sometimes to the other. 2. It is a good fight, a good warfare, the cause is good, and the victory is sure, if we continue faithful and courageous. 3. We must fight this good fight, we must fight it out, and finish our course; we must not give over till we are made more than conquerors through him that hath loved us, *Rom. viii. 37.* 4. It is a great comfort to a dying saint, when he can look back upon his past life, and say with our apostle, *I have fought, &c.* I have kept the faith, the doctrine of faith, and the grace of faith, towards the end of our days to be able to speak in this manner; what comfort, unspeakable comfort, will it afford? Let it then be our constant endeavour, by the grace of God, that we may finish our course with joy, *Acts xx. 24.*

3. With what pleasure he looks forward to the life he was to live hereafter, *ver. 8. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, &c.* He had lost for Christ, but he was sure he should not lose by him, *Phil. iii. 8.* Let this encourage Timothy to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ; that there is a crown of life before us, the glory and joy of which will abundantly recompense all the hardships and toils of our present warfare. Observe, It is called *a crown of righteousness*; because it will be the recompence of our services, which *God is not unrighteous to forget.* And because our holiness and righteousness will there be perfected, and that will be our crown.

God will give it as a *righteous judge*, who will let none lose by him.

And yet this crown of righteousness was not peculiar to Paul, as if it belonged only to apostles, and eminent ministers and martyrs, but *to all them also that love his appearing.* Observe, It is the character of all the saints, that they love the appearing of Jesus Christ: They love his first appearing, when he appeared to take away sin by the sacrifice of himself, *Heb. ix. 26.* They love to think of it; they love his second appearing at the great day; love it, and long for it: And those that love the appearing of Jesus Christ, he shall appear to their joy; there is a crown of righteousness reserved for them, which shall then be given them, *Heb. ix. 28.*

We learn hence, 1. The Lord is the righteous judge, for his judgment is according to truth. 2. Believers crown is a crown of righteousness, purchased by the righteousness of Christ, and bestowed as the reward of the saints righteousness. 3. This crown, which believers shall wear, is laid up for them; they have it not at present, for here they are but heirs; they have it not in possession, and yet it is sure, for it is laid up for them. 4. The righteous judge will give it to all that love, prepare, and long for, his appearing, *Surely I come quickly, Amen, even so come, Lord Jesus.*

9. Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me. 10. For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica: Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia. 11. Only Luke is with me. Take Mark and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry. 12. And Tychicus which I sent to Ephesus. 13. The cloke that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments. 14. Alexander the copper-smith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works. 15. Of whom be thou ware also; for he hath greatly withstood our words.

Here are divers particular matters which Paul mentions to Timothy now at the closing of the epistle.

1. He bids him hasten to him, if possible, *ver. 9. Do thy diligence to come shortly to me:* For Timothy was an evangelist that was not fixed pastor of any one place, but attended the motions of the apostles, to build upon their foundation. Paul wanted Timothy's company and help, and the reason he gives is, because several had left him, *ver. 10.* One from an ill principle, that was Demas, who abides under an ill name for it. *Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world.* He quitted Paul and his interest, either for fear of suffering, because Paul was now a prisoner, and he was afraid of coming into trouble upon his account, or being called off from his ministry by secular affairs, which he entangled himself in, his first love to Christ and his gospel was forsaken and forgotten, and he fell in love with the world. Note, Love to this present world is oftentimes the cause of apostasy from the truths and ways of Jesus Christ. He is gone off, *is departed to Thessalonica*; called thither perhaps by trade, or by some other worldly business. Crescens is gone one way, and Titus another way, and only Luke was with Paul; *ver. 11, 12.* Was not that enough? Paul did not think it so, he loved the company of his friends.

2. He speaks respectfully concerning Mark. He is *profitable to me for the ministry.* It is supposed this Mark was he, about whom Paul and Barnabas fell out, *Acts xv. 39.* Paul would not take him with him to the work, because he had once flinched and drawn back: But now, saith he, take Mark and bring him with thee. By this it appears that Paul was now reconciled to Mark, and had now a better opinion of him than he had had formerly. This teaches us to be of a forgiving spirit, and those that are profitable and useful, though they may have done amiss, yet we must not therefore disclaim for ever making use of them.

3. Paul orders Timothy to come to him, bids him as he came through Troas to bring with him from thence, those things which he had left behind him there, *ver. 13.* his cloke he had left there, which it may be Paul had the more occasion for in a cold prison. It is probable it was the habit that Paul usually wore, a plain dress. Some read it, the *roll of parchment I left at Troas*; others the *desk* that I left. Paul was guided by divine inspiration, and yet he would have his books with him: Whereas he had exhorted Timothy to give attendance to reading, so he did himself, though he was now ready to be offered. As long as we live we must be still learning, *but especially the parchments*, which some think were the originals of his epistles; others think were the skins of which he made his tents, whereby he got a livelihood, working with his own hands.

4. He mentions Alexander, and the mischief that he had done him, *ver. 14, 15.* This is he that is spoke of *Acts xix. 33.* It should seem he had been a professor of the Christian religion, a forward professor, for he was there particularly maligned by the worshippers

worshippers of Diana, and yet he did Paul much evil. Paul was in as much danger from false brethren, 2 Cor. xi. 26. as from open enemies. Paul foretels that God would reckon with him. It is a prophetic denunciation of the just judgment of God that would befall him. The Lord *will reward him according to his works*. He cautions Timothy to take heed of him, *of whom be thou ware also*, that he do not, under pretence of friendship, betray thee to mischief. It is dangerous having any thing to do with those *that* would be enemies to such a man as Paul.

Observe 1. Some that were once Paul's hearers and admirers, did not give him reason to remember them with much pleasure, for one forsook him, and another did him much evil, and greatly withstood his words. Yet, 2. At the same time he mentions some with pleasure, the badness of some did not make him forget the goodness of others; such as Timothy, Titus, Mark, and Luke. 3. The apostle hath left a brand on the names and memory of two persons, the one is, Demas, who forsook him, having loved the present world, and the other is Alexander, who greatly withstood his words. 4. God will reward evil-doers, particularly apostates, according to their works. Lastly, Of such that are of Alexander's spirit and temper we should beware, for they will do us no good, but all the mischief that is in their power.

16. At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: *I pray God* that it may not be laid to their charge. 17. Notwithstanding, the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and *that* all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. 18. And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. 19. Salute Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus. 20. Erastus abode at Corinth: but Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick. 21. Do thy diligence to come before winter. Eubulus greeteth thee, and Pudens, and Linus, and Claudia, and all the brethren. 22. The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit. Grace be with you. Amen.

Here he gives Timothy an account of his own present circumstances. He had lately been called to appear before the emperor, upon his appeal to Cæsar, and then *no man stood with him*, ver. 16. to plead his cause, to bear testimony for him, or so much as to keep him in countenance, but *all men forsook him*. This was strange, that so good a man as Paul should have no body to own him, even at Rome, where there were many Christians, whose faith was spoken of throughout all the world, Rom. i. 8. But men are but men. The Christians at Rome were forward to go and meet him, Acts xxviii. but when it came to the pinch that they would be in danger of suffering with him, then they all forsook him. He prays that *God would not lay it to their charge*; intimating, that it was a great fault, and God might justly be angry with them, but he prays God to forgive them. See what distinction is put between sins of presumption, and sins of infirmity: Alexander the copper-smith, that maliciously withstood Paul, he prays against him, *The Lord reward him according to his works*; but these Christians that through weakness shrunk from Paul in time of trial, *The Lord lay it not to their charge*.

Here we see, 1. St. Paul had his trials in his friends forsaking him in a time of danger, as well as in the opposition made by enemies; all forsook him. 2. It was their sin not to appear for the good apostle, especially at his first answer; but it was a sin of weakness, and therefore the more excusable. Yet, 3. God might lay it to their charge, but St. Paul endeavours to prevent it by his earnest prayers, *Let it not be laid to their charge*.

Notwithstanding this, God stood by him, ver. 17. i. e. gave him extraordinary wisdom and courage, to enable him to speak so much the better himself. When he had no body to keep him in countenance, God made his face to shine, *that by me the preaching might be fully known*, that is, God brought me out from that difficulty, that I might preach the gospel, which is my business. Nay, it should seem, that he might preach the gospel at that time; for Paul knew how to preach at the bar, as well as in the pulpit; and *that all the Gentiles might hear*; the emperor himself, and the great men, that would never have heard Paul preach, if he had not been brought before them. *And I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion*; i. e. of Nero, as some think, or some other judge. Some understand it only as a proverbial form of speech, to signify that he was in imminent danger. *And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work*. See how Paul improved his experiences; he that hath delivered, doth deliver, and we trust he shall yet deliver. *Shall deliver me from every evil work*, i. e. from doing any ill myself, and having any ill done to me by others. *And shall preserve me to his heavenly kingdom*. And for this he gives glory to God, rejoicing in hope of the glory of God.

1. If the Lord stands by us, he will strengthen us in a time of difficulty and danger, and his presence will more than supply every one's absence. 2. When the Lord preserves his servants from great and imminent danger, it is for eminent work and service. Paul was preserved, that by him the preaching might be fully known, &c. 3. Former deliverances should encourage future hopes. 4. There is an heavenly kingdom, to which the Lord will preserve his faithful, witnessing, or suffering servants. Lastly, We ought to give God the glory of all past, present, and future deliverances. *To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

He sends salutations to Aquila, and Priscilla, and the household of Onesiphorus, ver. 19. He mentions his leaving Trophimus sick at Miletum, ver. 20. by which it appears that though the apostles healed all manner of diseases miraculously, for the confirmation of their doctrine, yet they did not exert that power upon their own friends, lest it should have looked like a collusion.

He hastens Timothy to *come to him before winter*, ver. 21. because he longed to see him, and because in the winter the journey or voyage would be more dangerous.

He sends commendations to him from Eubulus, and Pudens, and Linus, and Claudia, and all the brethren. One of the heathen writers at this time mentions one Pudens and his wife Claudia, and saith, that Claudia was a Briton; whence some have gathered, that it was this Pudens, and that Claudia here was his wife, and that they were eminent Christians at Rome.

He concludes with a prayer, that the *Lord Jesus would be with his spirit*. We need no more to make us happy than to have the Lord Jesus Christ with our spirits; for in him all spiritual blessings are summed up. And it is the best prayer we can put up for our friends, that the Lord Jesus Christ may be with their spirits, to sanctify and save them, and at last to receive them to himself as Stephen the proto-martyr prayed, *Lord Jesus, receive my spirit*, Acts vii. 59. q. d. Lord Jesus, receive that spirit thou hast been with whilst it was united to the body, do not now leave it in its separate state.

Grace be with you. Amen. This was our apostle's token in every epistle, so he wrote, *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.* 2 Theff. iii. 17, 18. And if grace be with us here to convert and change us, to make us holy, and to keep us humble, and to enable us to persevere to the end, glory will crown us hereafter, *for the Lord is a sun, and a shield, the Lord will give grace and glory, and no good will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. O Lord of Hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee.* Psal. lxxxiv. 11, 12.

Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, our Saviour, be honour and glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

A N

E X P O S I T I O N

O F T H E

Epistle of St. P A U L to T I T U S,

W I T H

P R A C T I C A L O B S E R V A T I O N S.

This epistle of Paul to Titus is much of the same nature with those to Timothy; both were converts of Paul, and his companions in labours and sufferings; both in the office of evangelists, whose work was to water the churches planted by the apostles, and to set in order the things that were wanting in them: They were vice-apostles, as it were working the work of the Lord, as they did, and mostly under their direction, though not despotick and arbitrary, but with the concurring exercise of their own prudence and judgment, 1 Cor. xvi. 10, 12. We read much of this Titus, his titles and character, and active usefulness in many places: He was a Greek, Gal. ii. 3. St. Paul called him his son, Tit. i. 4. his brother, 2 Cor. ii. 13. his partner, and fellow-helper, 2 Cor. viii. 23. one that walked in the same Spirit, and in the same steps with himself. He went up with the apostle to the church at Jerusalem, Gal. ii. 1. was much conversant at Corinth, for which church he had an earnest care, 2 Cor. viii. 16. Paul's second epistle to them, (and probably his first also) was sent by his hand, 2 Cor. viii, 16, 17, 18, 23. and chap. ix. 2, 3, 4, and chap. xii. 18. He was with the apostle at Rome, and thence went into Dalmatia, 2 Tim. iv. 10. after which no more occurs of him in the scriptures. So that by them he appears not to have been a fixed bishop; if such he were and in those times, the church of Corinth, where he most tended, had best title to him. In Crete (now called Candia, formerly Hecatompolis, from the hundred cities that were in it) a large island at the mouth of the Ægean sea, the gospel had got some footing; and here was Paul and Titus in one of their travels cultivating this plantation; but the apostle of the Gentiles, having on him the care of all the churches, could not himself tarry long at this place; therefore left Titus some time there to carry on the work which had been begun; wherein, probably meeting with more difficulty than ordinary, Paul wrote this epistle to him; and yet perhaps not so much for his own sake, as for the peoples, that the endeavours of Titus, strengthened with apostolick advices and authority, might be more significant and effectual among them. He was to see all the cities furnished with good pastors; to reject and keep out the unmeet and unworthy; to teach sound doctrine, and instruct all sorts in their duties; to set forth the free grace of God in man's salvation by Christ; and withal to shew the necessity of maintaining good works by those who have believed in God, and hope for eternal life from him.

C H A P. I.

In this chapter we have the preface or introduction to the epistle, shewing from and to whom it was written, with the apostle's salutation and prayer for Titus, wishing all blessings to him, ver. 1—4. Entrance into the matter, by signifying the end of Titus's being left at Crete, ver. 5. And how the same should be pursued in reference both to good and bad ministers from ver. 6. to the end.

PAUL a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of Gods elect, and the acknowledging of the truth, which is after godliness: 2. In hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lye, promised before the world began; 3. But hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me, according to the commandment of God our Saviour: 4. To Titus mine own son after the

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common faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour.

I. Here is the preface to the epistle: Shewing,

1. The writer. Paul a Gentile name, taken by the apostle of the Gentiles, Acts xiii. 9, 46, 47. Ministers will accommodate even smaller matters, so as may be any furthering of acceptance in their work. When the Jews rejected the gospel, and the Gentiles received it, we read no more of this apostle by his Jewish name Saul, but by his Roman one Paul.

A servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ. Here he is described by his relation and office. *A servant of God*, not in the general sense only, as a man and a Christian; but specially, as a minister, *-serving God in the gospel of his Son*, Rom. i. 9. This is an high honour; it is the glory of angels that they are *ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be the heirs of salvation*, Heb. i. 14. Yea, more especially a chief minister, *an apostle of Jesus Christ*; one who had seen the Lord, and was immediately called and commissioned by him, and had his doctrine from him. Observe, The highest officers in the church are but servants: There is much divinity and devotion in the inscriptions of the epistles. The apostles of Jesus Christ, who were employed to spread and propagate his religion, were therein also the

servants

servants of God; they did not set up any thing inconsistent with the truths and duties of natural religion. Christianity, which they preached, was in order to clear and enforce those natural principles, as well as to advance them, and to superadd what was fit and necessary in man's degenerate and revolted state: Therefore the apostles of Jesus Christ were the servants of God, according to the faith of God's elect. Their doctrine agreed with the faith of all the elect from the beginning of the world, and was for propagating and promoting of the same. Observe, There are elect of God, 1 Pet. i. 2. and in these the holy Spirit works precious divine faith, proper to those who are chosen to eternal life, 2 Thess. ii. 13, 14. *God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel.* Faith is the first principle of sanctification. *And the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness.* The gospel is truth; the great, sure, and saving truth, Col. i. 5. *the word of truth the gospel.* Divine faith rests not on fallible reasonings, or probable opinions; but on the infallible word, the truth itself, *which is after godliness*, i. e. of a godly nature and tendency, pure and purifying the heart of the believer. By this mark judge of doctrines and of spirits, whether they be of God or not; what is impure, and prejudicial to true piety and practical religion, cannot be of divine original; all gospel truth is *after godliness*, teaching and nourishing reverence and fear of God, and obedience to him; it is truth not only to be known, but *acknowledged*; it must be held forth in word and practice, Col. ii. 15, 16. *With the heart man believes to righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation*, Rom. x. 10. Such as retain the truth in unrighteousness, neither know nor believe as they ought. To bring to this *knowledge and faith*, and to the *acknowledging and profession of the truth which is after godliness*, is the great end of the gospel ministry, even of the highest degree and order in it; their teachings should have this chief aim, viz. to beget faith and confirm in it. Ver. 2. *In (or for) hope of eternal life.* This is the further intent of the gospel, to beget *hope* as well as *faith*; to take off the mind and heart from the world, and to raise them to heaven, and the things above. The faith and godliness of Christians lead to eternal life, and give hope and well grounded expectation of it; for *God that cannot lye, hath promised it.* It is the honour of God that he cannot lye or deceive; and the comfort of believers, whose treasure is laid up in his faithful promises.

But, *Quest.* How is he said to promise before the world began? *Answ.* By promise some understand his decree, he purposed it in his eternal councils, which was as it were his promise in *embryo*: or rather, say some, *πρὸ χρόνων αἰώνων* is *before ancient times*, or many ages ago, referring to the promise darkly delivered, Genesis iii. 15. Here is the stability and antiquity of the promise of eternal life to the saints; God, that cannot lye, hath promised before the world began, i. e. many ages since. How excellent then is the gospel, that was the matter of divine promise so early, and how much to be esteemed by us, and what thanks due for our privilege beyond those before us! *Blessed are your eyes, for they see*, &c. No wonder if the contempt of it be punished severely, since he hath not only promised it of old; But, ver. 3. *hath in due times manifested his word through preaching*, i. e. made that his promise so darkly delivered of old, *in due time*, i. e. the proper season before appointed, more plain by *preaching*; that which some called *foolishness of preaching* hath been thus honoured. *Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*, viz. by the word preached. *Which is committed unto me.* The ministry is a trust; none taketh this honour, but he that is thereunto appointed, and who is appointed and called, must preach the word, 1 Cor. ix. 16. *Who is unto me if I preach not the gospel.* Unpreaching ministers are none of the apostles successors. *According to the commandment of God our Saviour*; preaching is a work appointed by God as a saviour. See a proof here of Christ's deity, for by him was the gospel committed to Paul, when he was converted, Acts ix. 15, 17. and chapter xxii. 10, 14, 15. and again when Christ appeared to him, ver. 17, 18, 21. He therefore is this Saviour, not but that the whole Trinity concur therein; the Father saves by the Son, through the Spirit, and all concur in sending ministers. Let none rest therefore in mens calling without God's; he furnishes, and inclines, and authorizes, and gives opportunity for the work.

2. Here is the person written to described,

(1.) By his name, Titus, a Gentile Greek, yet called both to the faith and ministry. Observe, The grace of God is free and powerful. What worthiness or preparation was there in one of heathen stock and education?

(2.) He is described by his spiritual relation unto the apostle. *Mine own (or my genuine) son*, not by natural generation, but by supernatural regeneration. *I have begotten you through the gospel*, said he to the Corinthians, 1 Cor. iv. 15. Ministers are spiritual fathers to those whom they are the means of converting, and will tenderly affect and care for them, and must be answerably regarded by them. *Mine own son after the common faith*: i. e. That faith which is common to all the regenerate, and which thou hast in truth, and exprestest to the life. This might be said to distinguish Titus from hypocrites and false teachers, and to recommend him to the regard of the Cretians, as being among

them a lively image of the apostle himself, in faith, and life, and heavenly doctrine. To this Titus, deservedly so dear to the apostle, is,

3. The salutation and prayer, wishing all blessings to him. *Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour.* Here are,

(1.) The blessings wished: *Grace, mercy, and peace.* *Grace*, i. e. the free favour of God, and acceptance with him. *Mercy*, i. e. the fruits of that favour in pardon of sins, and freedom from all miseries by it, both here and hereafter. And *peace*, the positive effect and fruit of mercy. Peace, with God through Christ, who is our peace, and with the creatures and ourselves, outward and inward peace, comprehending all good whatsoever, that makes for our happiness in time, and to eternity. Observe, Grace is the fountain of all blessings: Mercy and peace, and all good springs out of this. Get into God's favour, and all must be well: for,

(2.) These are the persons from whom blessings are wished. *From God the Father*, the fountain of all good. Every blessing and comfort comes to us from God as a father, he is the Father of all by creation, but of the good by adoption and regeneration. *And the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour*, viz. As the way and means of procurement and conveyance: All is from the Father by the Son, who is Lord by nature, heir of all things, and our Lord, redeemer, and head, ordering and ruling his members: All are put under him; we hold of him, as *in capite*, and owe subjection and obedience to him, who is also Jesus and Christ, the anointed Saviour, and especially our Saviour who believe in him, delivering us from sin and hell, and bringing us to heaven and happiness.

Thus far is the preface to the epistle, then follows:

II. The entrance into the matter, by signifying,

1. The end of Titus's being left in Crete.

5. For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldst set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee.

Here is the end expressed,

(1.) More generally: *For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldst set in order the things that are wanting.* This was the business of evangelists, in which office Titus was, to water where the apostles had planted, 1 Cor. vi. 3. Furthering and finishing what they had begun, so much *ἐπιδοτέον* imports *to order after another*. Titus was to go on in settling what the apostle himself had not time for in his short stay there. 1. Observe, The apostle's great diligence in the gospel; when he had set things on foot in one place, he hastened away to another. He was debtor to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians, and laboured to spread the gospel as far as he could among them all. And, 2. Observe too, His faithfulness and prudence. He neglected not the places that he went from; but left some to cultivate the young plantation, and carry on what was begun. And, 3. Observe, Likewise his humility; he disdained not to be helped in his work, and that by such as were not of so high a rank in the ministry, nor of so great gifts and furniture as himself; so the gospel might be farthered, and the good of souls promoted, he willingly used the hands of others in it; a fit example for exciting zeal and industry, and engaging to faithfulness and care of the flock, and present, or absent, living, and dying, for ministers, as much as in them lies, to provide for the spiritual edification, and comfort of their people. We may here also, 4. Observe, That Titus, though inferior to an apostle, yet was above the ordinary fixed pastors or bishops, who were to tend particular churches, as their peculiar stated charge; but Titus was in a higher sphere, to ordain such ordinary pastors where wanting, and settle things in their first state and form, and then to pass to other places for like service, as there might be need. Titus was not only a minister of the catholick church, as all others also are, but a catholick minister. Others had power habitual, and in *actu primo* to minister any where, upon call and opportunity; but evangelists, such as Titus was, had power, in *actu secundo* & *exercito*, and could exercise their ministry wherever they came, and claim maintenance of the churches; they were every where actually in their diocese or province, and had right to direct and guide, and preside among the ordinary pastors and ministers. Where an apostle could act as an apostle, an evangelist could as an evangelist; for *they worked the work of the Lord, as they did*, 1 Cor. xvi. 10. in a like unfixed and itinerant manner.

Here at Crete Titus was but occasionally, and for a short time; Paul willed him to dispatch the business he was left for, and come to him at Nicopolis, where he purposed to winter; after this he was sent to Corinth, was with the apostle at Rome, and was sent thence into Dalmatia, which is the last we read of him in scripture, so that from thence no fixed episcopacy in him does appear; he left Crete, and we find not in scripture that he returned thither any more.

But, *Quest.* What power had either Paul or Titus here? Was not what they did an incroachment on the rights of civil rulers?

Answ.

Answ. In no sort, they came not to meddle with the civil rights of any. *Luke xii. 14. who made me a judge, or a divider over you?* Their work was spiritual, to be carried on by conviction and persuasion, no way interfering with, or prejudicing, or weakening, the power of magistrates, but securing and strengthening it rather; the *things wanting* were not such as civil magistrates are the fountains or authors of, but divine and spiritual ordinances, and appointments for spiritual ends, and deriving from Christ the king and head of the church: For settling these was Titus left. And observe, No easy thing is it to raise churches, and bring them to perfection. Paul had himself been here labouring, and yet were there *things wanting*, materials are out of square, need much hewing and fitting to bring them into right form, and when they are set therein, to hold and keep them so. The best are apt to decay and to go out of order. Ministers are to help against this, to get what is amiss rectified, and what is wanting supplied. *This* in general was Titus's work in Crete: And

(2.) In special: *To ordain elders in every city*, i. e. Ministers who were mostly out of the elder, and most understanding, and experienced Christians; or if younger in years, yet such as were grave and solid in their deportment and manners: These were to be set where was any fit number of Christians, as in bigger towns and cities it first and mostly was; though villages too might have them, where were Christians enough for it. These presbyters or elders were to have the ordinary and stated care and charge of the churches; to feed and govern them, and perform all pastoral work and duty in and towards them. The word is used sometimes more largely for any that bear ecclesiastical function in the church, and so the apostles were presbyters or elders, *1 Pet. v. 1.* but here it is meant of ordinary fixed pastors; who *laboured in the word and doctrine*, and were *over the churches in the Lord*; such as are described here throughout the chapter. This word presbyter some use in the same sense as *sacerdos*, and translate it *priests*, a term not given to gospel ministers, unless in a figurative or allusive way, as all God's people are said to be made *kings and priests unto God* (*1 Pet. ii. 9.* it is not *πρεσβυτέρους*) to offer up spiritual sacrifices of prayers, and praises, and alms, &c. But properly we have no priests under the gospel; but Christ alone *the high priest of our profession*, *Heb. iii. 1.* who offered up himself a sacrifice to God for us, and ever lives, in virtue thereof, to make intercession in our behalf. Presbyters here therefore are not proper priests to offer sacrifices, either typical or real; but only gospel ministers, to dispense Christ's ordinances, and to *feed the church of God, over which the Holy Ghost hath made them overseers*. 1. Observe, A church without a fixed and standing ministry in it is imperfect and wanting. 2. Observe, Where a fit number of believers is, presbyters or elders must be set, their continuance in churches is as necessary as their first appointment, *for perfecting the saints, and edifying the body of Christ, till all come to a perfect man in Christ*, i. e. till the whole number of God's chosen be called and united to Christ in one body, and brought to their full stature and strength, and that measure of grace that is proper, and designed for them, *Ephes. iv. 12, 13.* Work this is, that must and will be doing to the world's end, to which therefore the necessary and appointed means for it must last. What praise is due to God for such an institution! What thankfulness from those that enjoy the benefits of it! What pity and prayer for such as want it! *Pray the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.* Faith comes by hearing, and is preserved, and maintained, and made fruitful through it also. Ignorance and corruption, decays of good, and increase of all evil, come by want of a teaching and quickening ministry. On such accounts therefore was *Titus left in Crete, to set in order the things that were wanting, and to ordain elders in every city*; but this he was to do, not *ad libitum*, or according to his own list, or fancy, but according to apostolick direction. Which is

(3.) The rule of his proceeding. *As I had appointed thee*, probably when he was going from him, and in the presence and hearing of others; which now he may refer to, not so much for Titus's own sake, as for the people's, that they might the more readily yield obedience unto Titus, knowing and minding that in what he did, he was warranted and supported by apostolick injunction and authority. As under the law all things were to be made according to the pattern shewn to Moses in the mount; so under the gospel all must be ordered and managed according to the direction of Christ, and of his chief ministers, who were infallibly guided by him. Human traditions and inventions may not be brought into the church of God. Prudent disposals for carrying on the ends of Christ's appointments, according to the general rules of the word, such may, yea, must be; but none may alter any thing in the substance of the faith, or worship, or order and discipline of the churches: If an evangelist might not do any thing, but by appointment, much less may others. The church is the house of God, and to him it belongs to appoint the officers and orders of it, as he pleaseth, the *as* here refers to the qualifications, and character of the elders, that he was to ordain. *Ordain elders in every city, as I appointed thee*, i. e. such as I then described, and shall now again more particularly point out to thee, which he does from the sixth verse to the ninth inclusive. And here is

2. The second thing in the matter of the epistle, viz. The directions that the apostle gives Titus about ordination, shewing whom he should ordain, and whom not.

(1.) Of those whom he should ordain: He points out their qualifications and virtues; such as respect their life and manners; and such as relate to their doctrine: The former in the sixth, seventh, and eighth verses, and the latter in the ninth.

6. If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children, not accused of riot, or unruly. 7. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; 8. But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; 9. Holding fast the faithful word, as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine, both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.

[1.] Their qualifications respecting their life and manners are,

(1.) More general; *If any be blameless*, not absolutely without fault, so none are; for *there is none that liveth and sinneth not*: Nor altogether unblamed, that is rare and hard: Christ himself and his apostles were blamed, though not worthy of it; in Christ to be sure was nothing blamable; and his apostles were not such as their enemies charged them to be. But the meaning is, he must be one that lies not under an ill character; but rather must have a good report, even *from those that are without*; not grossly or scandalously guilty, so as would bring reproach upon their holy function; he must not be such an one.

(2.) More particularly:

1. There is his relative character; in his own person he must be of conjugal chastity; *the husband of one wife*. The church of Rome faith the husband of no wife, but from the beginning it was not so; marriage is an ordinance from which no profession or calling is a bar, *1 Cor. ix. 5. Have I not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles*, saith St. Paul. *Forbidding to marry* is one of the erroneous doctrines of the antichristian church, *1 Tim. iv. 3.* Not that ministers must be married, that is not meant; but *the husband of one wife*, may be either not having divorced his wife and married another, as was too common among them of the circumcision, even for slight causes: or *the husband of one wife*, i. e. at one and the same time, no bigamist; not that he might not be married to more than one wife successively; but being married he must have but one wife at once, not two or more according to the too common sinful practice of those times, by a perverse imitation of the patriarchs, from which evil custom our Lord taught a reformation. Polygamy is scandalous in any, as also having an harlot or concubine with his lawful wife; such sin, or any wanton libidinous carriage, must be very remote from such as would enter into so sacred a function. And as to his children, *having faithful children*, i. e. obedient and good, brought up in the true Christian faith, and living according to it, at least as much as the parents can that it be so. It is for the honour of ministers that their children be faithful and pious, and such as become their religion. *Not accused of riot, or unruly*, i. e. not justly so accused, as having giving ground and occasion for it; for otherwise the most innocent may be falsely so charged; they must look to it therefore that there be no colour for such censure. Children so faithful, and obedient, and temperate, will be a good sign of faithfulness and diligence in the parent, who has so educated and instructed them; and from his faithfulness in the less, there may be encouragement to commit to him the greater viz. the rule, and government of the church of God.

The ground of this qualification is shewn from the nature of his office, *ver. 7. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God*. Those before termed presbyters or elders, are in this verse stiled bishops, and such they were, having no ordinary fixed and standing officers above them. Titus's business here it is plain was but occasional, and his stay short, as before was noted. Having ordained elders and settled things in their due form, he went and left all, for ought appears in scripture, in the hands of those elders whom here he calls bishops and stewards of God. We read not in the sacred writings of any successor he had in Crete; but to those elders or bishops was committed the full charge of feeding, and ruling, and watching over their flock; they wanted not any powers necessary for carrying on religion and the ministry of it among them, and deriving it down to succeeding ages. Now, being such bishops and overseers of the flock, who were to be examples to them, and God's stewards to take care of the affairs of his house, to provide for and dispense to them things needful; here is great reason that their character should be clear and good; that they should be blameless. How else could it be, but that religion must suffer, their work be hindered, and souls prejudiced and endangered, whom they were set to save? These are the qualifications relative with the ground of them.

(2.) The

(2.) The more absolute ones are expressed.

[1.] Negatively shewing what an elder or bishop must not be, *not self-willed*. The prohibition is of large extent, excluding self-opinion, or over-weening conceit of parts and abilities, and abounding in one's own sense; and self-love, and self-seeking, making *self* the centre of all; also self-confidence and trust, and self-pleasing, little regarding, or setting by others; not proud, stubborn, froward, inflexible, set on one's own will and way; or churlish, as Nabal; to such sense do expositors carry it. A great honour it is to a minister not to be thus affected, to be ready to ask and to take advice, to be ready to pay as much as reasonably may be to the mind and will of others, becoming all things to all men, that they may gain some. *Not soon angry*, *μὴ ὀργίζων*, *not one of a hasty angry temper*, soon and easily provoked and inflamed. How unfit are they to govern a church, who cannot govern themselves: their own turbulent and unruly passions? The ministers must be meek and gentle, and patient towards all men. *Not given to wine*, no greater reproach on a minister than to be a wine-bibber, one that loves it, and gives himself undue liberty this way, who *continues at the wine or strong drink till it inflames him*. Seasonable and moderate use of this, as of other of God's good creatures, is not unlawful. *Use a little wine for thy stomach's sake, and thine often infirmities*, said Paul to Timothy, 1 Tim. v. 23. But excess therein is shameful in all, especially in a minister. *Wine takes away the heart*, turns the man into a brute; here most proper is that exhortation of the apostle, *Ephes. v. 18. Be not drunk with wine wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit*. Here is no exceeding, but in the former too easily there may; take heed therefore of going too near the brink. *No striker*, viz. In any quarrellous or contentious manner, not injuriously, or out of revenge, with cruelty or unnecessary roughness. *Not given to filthy lucre*: Not greedy of it, as 1 Tim. iii. 3. whereby is not meant refusing a just return for their labours, in order to their necessary support and comfort; but not making gain their first or chief end; entering into the ministry, or managing of it with base worldly views. Nothing more unbecoming a minister who is to direct his own and others eyes to another world, than to be too intent upon this: It is called *filthy lucre* from its defiling the soul that inordinately affects or greedily looks after it, as if it were any otherwise desirable than for the good and lawful uses of it. Thus of the negative part of the bishop's character. But,

[2.] Positively he must be, *ver. 8. A lover of hospitality*: As an evidence that he is not given to filthy lucre, but is willing to use what he hath to the best purposes, not laying up for himself, so as to hinder charitable laying out for the good of others; *receiving and entertaining strangers*, as the word imports, a great and necessary office of love, especially in such times as then were, of affliction and distress; when Christians were put to fly and wander for safety from persecution and enemies, or in travelling to and fro where were not such public houses for reception, as in our days; nor, it may be, had many poor saints sufficiency of their own for such uses; then to receive and entertain them, was good and pleasing to God. And such a spirit and practice, according to ability, and occasion, is very becoming such, as should be examples of good works. *A lover of good men*, or of good things; ministers should be exemplary in both; this will evidence their open piety, and likeness to God, and their master Jesus Christ: *Do good to all, but especially to them of the household of faith*, these that are the excellent of the earth, in whom should be all our delight. *Sober, or prudent*, as the word signifies; a needful grace in a minister, both for his ministerial and personal carriage and management. He should be a wise steward, and one that is not rash, or foolish, or heady; but who can govern well his passions and affections. Just, viz. in things belonging to civil life, and moral righteousness, and equity in dealings, giving to all their due. *Holy* in what concerns religion; one that reverences and worships God, and is of a spiritual and heavenly conversation. *Temperate*, it comes from a word that signifies *strength*, and notes one that hath power over his appetite and affections, or in things lawful can, for good ends, restrain and hold them in. Nothing more becoming a minister than such things as these; sobriety, temperance, justice, and holiness; *sober* in respect of himself, *just* and righteous towards all men, and *holy* towards God. And thus of the qualifications respecting the minister's life, and manners; relative and absolute, negative and positive; what he must not, and what he must be and do. Now

[2.] As to doctrine:

(1.) Here is his duty, *holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught*, i. e. keeping close to the doctrine of Christ, *the word of his grace*, adhering thereto according to the instructions he hath received; holding it fast in his own belief and profession, and in teaching others. 1. Observe, The word of God, revealed in the scripture, is a true and infallible word; the word of him that is the amen, the true and faithful witness, and whose Spirit guided the pen-men of it. *Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*. 2. Observe, Ministers must hold fast, and hold forth the faithful word, in their teaching and life. *I have kept the faith*, was Paul's comfort, 2 Tim. iv. 7. and not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God there was his faithfulness, Acts xxii. 27.

(2.) Here is the end; *That he may be able by sound doctrine, both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers*, i. e. to persuade and draw others to the true faith, and convince the contrary minded. Which how should he do if himself were uncertain or unsteady, not holding fast that *faithful word and sound doctrine*, which should be the matter of this teaching, and the means and ground of convincing those that oppose the truth? See we here summarily the great work of the ministry, to exhort those who are willing to know, and do their duty; and to convince them that contradict; both which are to be done by *sound doctrine*, i. e. in a rational instructive way, by scripture arguments, and testimonies, which are the infallible words of truth, what all may and should rest and be satisfied in, and determined by. And thus of the qualifications of the elders that Titus was to ordain.

(2.) The apostle's directory shews whom he should reject or avoid, men of another character, the mention of whom is brought in as a reason of that care he had recommended about the qualifications of ministers, why they should be such, and only such as he had described. The reasons he takes both from bad teachers and hearers among them, from *verse 10. to the end*.

[1.] From bad teachers.

10. For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, especially they of the circumcision: 11. Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake.

(1.) Those false teachers are described. They were *unruly*, head-strong, and ambitious of power, refractory and untractable, as some render it, and such as would not bear or submit themselves to the discipline and necessary order in the church, impatient of good government and of sound doctrine. *And vain talkers and deceivers*, conceiting themselves to be wise, but really foolish, and thence great talkers, and falling into errors and mistakes, and fond of them, were studious and industrious to draw others into the same. Many such there were, *especially they of the circumcision*, converts, as they pretended at least, from the Jews, who yet were for mingling Judaism and Christianity together, and so making a corrupt medley. These were the false teachers. And,

(2.) There is the apostle's direction how to deal with them *ver. 11. Their mouths must be stopped*, not by outward force: Titus had no such power, nor are those the gospel methods; but by confutation and conviction, shewing them their error, *not giving place to them, even for an hour*. In case of obstinacy indeed, and breaking the peace of the church, and corrupting other churches, censures are to have place; the last means of recovering the faulty, and preventing the hurt of many. Observe, Faithful ministers must timely oppose seducers, *that their folly being made manifest, they may proceed no further*.

(3.) The reasons are given for this: First, from the pernicious effects of their errors, *They subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not*, viz. The necessity of circumcision, and of keeping the law of Moses, &c. So subverting the gospel, and the souls of men; not some few only, but whole families. It was unjustly charged on the apostles, *that they turned the world upside down*; but justly on these false teachers, that they drew many from the true faith to their ruin; the mouths of such should be stopped, especially considering, secondly, their base end in what they do, viz. *For filthy lucre's sake*, serving a worldly interest, under pretence of religion, *love of money is the root of all evil*. Most fit that such should be resisted, and confuted, and put to shame, by sound doctrine, and reasons from the scriptures. Thus of the grounds respecting the bad teachers.

[2.] In reference to their people or hearers, who are described from ancient testimony given of them.

12. One of themselves, even a prophet of their own, said, The Cretians are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies. 13. This witness is true: wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be found in the faith; 14. Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth.

(1.) Here is the witness, *ver. 12. One of themselves, even a prophet of their own, said*, i. e. One of the Cretians, not of the Jews, viz. Epimenides a Greek poet, likely to know, and unlikely to slander them: *a prophet of their own*; so their poets were accounted writers of divine oracles, as they esteemed them. These often witnessed against the vices of the people: Aratus, Epimenides, and others among the Greeks; Horace, Juvenal, and Persius among the Latins: much smartness did they use against divers vices.

(2.) Here is the matter of his testimony, *Κρήτες ἀεὶ ψεύσαι, καὶ θηρία, καὶ ἀσύνετοι*. The Cretians are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies; even to a proverb, they were infamous for falsehood and lying, *κρητίζειν*, to play the Cretian, or to lye, is the same;

same; and they were compared to evil beasts for their sly hurtfulness and savage nature; and called *slow bellies*, for their laziness and sensuality more inclined to eat than to work, and live by some honest employment. Observe, Such scandalous vices as were the reproach of heathens, should be far from Christians: Falshood and lying, invidious craft and cruelty, all beastly and sensual practices, and idleness and sloth, are sins condemned by the light of nature; for these were the Cretians taxed by their own poets. And,

(3.) Here is the verification of this by the apostle himself, *ver. 13. This witness is true.* The apostle saw too much ground for that character. The temper of some nations is more inclined to some vices than others. The Cretians were too generally such as here described, slothful and ill natured, false and perfidious as the apostle himself vouches. And thence,

(4.) He instructs Titus how to deal with them. *Wherefore rebuke them sharply.* When Paul wrote to Timothy he bid him *instruct with meekness*; but now when he writes to Titus, he bids him *rebuke them sharply*. The reason of the difference may be taken either from the different temper of Timothy and Titus; the former might have more keeness in his disposition, and be apt to be warm in reproving, whom therefore he bids to *rebuke with meekness*; and the latter (Titus) might be one of more mildness, therefore he quickens him, and bids him *rebuke sharply*: Or rather it was from the difference of the case and people; Timothy had a more polite people to deal with, and therefore he must *rebuke them with meekness*; and Titus had to do with those who were more rough and uncultivated, and therefore he *must rebuke them sharply*; their corruptions were many and gross, and committed without shame, or modesty, and therefore should be dealt with accordingly. There must in reproving be a distinguishing of *sins* and *sinners*; some are more gross, and heinous in their nature, or in the manner of their commission, with openness and boldness, to the greater dishonour of God, and danger and hurt to men: and between *sinners* and *sinners*; some are of a more tender and tractable temper, apter to be wrought on by gentleness, and to be sunk and discouraged by too much roughness and severity; others more hardy and stubborn, and needing more cutting language to beget remorse, and shame. Wisdom therefore is requisite to temper, and manage reproofs aright, as may be most likely to do good. *Jude 22, 23. Of some have compassion, making a difference: And others save with fear pulling them out of the fire.* The Cretians sins and corruptions were many, and great, and habitual; therefore they must be rebuked sharply. But that such direction might not be misconstrued,

(5.) Here is the end of it noted, *That they may be found in the faith, ver. 14. Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth, i. e. that they may be and shew themselves truly and effectually changed from such evil temper and manners, as those Cretians in their natural state lived in; and might not adhere to, or regard (as some that were converted might be too ready to do) the Jewish traditions, and superstitions of the Pharisees, which would be apt to make them distrust the gospel, and the sound and wholesome truths of it.* 1. Observe, The sharpest reproofs must aim at the good of the reprovèd; they must not be of malice; or hatred, or ill-will; but of love: not to gratify pride, or passion, or any evil affection in the reprovèd; but to reclaim and reform the erroneous and the guilty. 2. Observe, Soundness in the faith is most desirable and necessary. This is the soul's health and vigour, pleasing to God, comfortable to the Christian, and what makes ready to be cheerful and constant in duty. 3. Observe, A special means to soundness in the faith, is to turn away the ear from fables, and the fancies of men, *1 Tim. i. 4. Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, that minister questions, rather than edifying, which is in faith.* So chap. iv. 7. *Refuse profane and old wives fables, and exercise thyself rather to godliness.* Fancies and devices of men in the worship of God, are contrary to truth and piety. Jewish ceremonies and rites, that were at first divine appointments, the substance being come, and their season and use over, are now but unwarranted commands of men, which not only stand not with, but turn from, the truth, *i. e. the pure gospel truth, and spiritual worship, set up by Christ instead of that bodily service under the law.* 4. Observe, A fearful judgment it is to be turned away from the truth; to leave Christ for Moses, the spiritual worship of the gospel for the carnal ordinances of the law; or the true divine institutions and precepts, for human inventions and appointments. *Who hath bewitched you, (said Paul to the Galatians, chap. iii. 1.) that ye should not obey the truth? Having begun in the Spirit are you made perfect by the flesh?* Thus having shewn the end of sharply reproving the corrupt and vitious Cretians, that they might be found in the faith, and not heed Jewish fables and commands of men,

(6.) He gives the reasons of this, from the liberty, we have by the gospel from legal observances, and the evil and mischief of a Jewish spirit under the Christian dispensation, in the two last verses, viz.

15. Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving, is nothing pure: but even their mind and conscience is defiled.

No. cxiii.

16. They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.

To good Christians that are found in the faith and thereby purified, *all things are pure*; meats and drinks, and such things that were forbidden under the law, and in which observance some were still apt to stick, in these there is now no such distinction, *all are pure, i. e. lawful and free in their use; but to them that are defiled, and unbelieving, nothing is pure*; things lawful and good they abuse and turn to sin; they suck poison out of that, from which others draw sweetness; because their mind and conscience, those leading faculties, are defiled; a taint is derived to all they do. *The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, Prov. xv. 8. And chap. xxiv. The plowing of the wicked is sin, not in itself, but as done by him; the carnality of the mind and heart mars all the labour of the hand.*

Objection. But are not these Judaizers, as you call them, men that profess religion, and speak well of God and Christ, and righteousness of life, and should they be so severely taxed? *Answer, ver. 16. They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate.* There are many who in word and tongue profess to know God, and yet in their lives and conversations deny and reject him; their practice is a contradiction to their profession. *They come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. Ezek. xxxiii. 31. Being abominable, and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate.* The apostle instructing Titus to rebuke sharply, does himself rebuke sharply; he gives them very hard words; yet doubtless no harder than their case warranted, and their need required. *Being abominable, βδελυγτοί*, but deserving that God and good men, should turn away their eyes from them as nauseous and offensive. *And disobedient, ἀπειθεῖς, unpersuadable and unbelieving*: They might do divers things; but it was not the obedience of faith, not what was commanded, or short of the command. *To every good work reprobate*, without skill or judgment to do any thing aright. See the miserable condition of hypocrites, such as have a form of godliness, but without the power; yet be we not so ready to fix this charge on others, as careful that it agree not to ourselves, that there be not in us *an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God*; but that we be sincere and without offence, till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God, Phil. i. 10, 11.

CHAP. II.

The apostle here directs Titus about the faithful discharge of his own office, generally *ver. 1. and particularly, as to several sorts of persons, ver. 2—10. and gives the grounds of these and of other following directions, ver. 11—14. with a summary direction in the close, ver. 15.*

1. **B**UT speak thou the things which become sound doctrine:

3. Here is the third thing in the matter of the epistle. In the chapter foregoing the apostle had directed Titus about matters of government, and to set in order the things that were wanting in the churches: Now here he exhorts him,

(1.) Generally to a faithful discharge of his own office. His ordaining others to preach, would not excuse himself from preaching, nor might he take care of ministers and elders only, but he must instruct private Christians also in their duty. The adversative particle (*but*) here points back to the corrupt teachers, who vented *fables* things vain and unprofitable; in opposition to them, faith he, *but speak thou the things that become sound doctrine, i. e. what is agreeable to the word, which is pure and uncorrupt, healthful and nourishing to eternal life.* 1. Observe, The true doctrines of the gospel are *sound doctrines*, formally and effectively; they are in themselves good and holy, and make the believers so; they make fit for, and vigorous in, the service of God. 2. Observe, Ministers must be careful to teach only such truths: If common talk of Christians must be *uncorrupt to the use of edifying, such as may minister grace to the hearers*, Ephes. iv. 29. much more must ministers preaching be such. Thus the apostle exhorts Titus generally: And then,

(2.) Specially and particularly he instructs him to apply this sound doctrine to several sorts of persons, from *ver. 2—10.* Ministers must not stay in generals, but must divide to every one his portion, what belongs to his age, or place, or condition of life; they must be particular, as well as practical in their preaching; they must teach men their duty, and must teach all and each his duty. Here is an excellent Christian directory, accommodated to the old, and to the young; to men, and women: to the preacher himself, and unto servants.

[1.] To the aged men.

40 I

2. That

2. That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience :

By *aged men* some understand *elders by office*, including deacons, &c. but it is rather to be taken of the *aged in point of years*. Old disciples of Christ must carry themselves in every thing agreeably to the Christian doctrine. *That the aged men be sober*, not thinking that the decays of nature, which they feel in old age, will justify them in any inordinacy, or intemperance, whereby they conceit to repair them ; they must keep measure in things, both for health and for fitness for counsel and example to the younger. *Grave* : Levity is unbecoming in any, but especially in the aged ; they should be composed and stayed, grave in habit, and speech, and behaviour ; garishness in dress, levity and vanity in the carriage, how unbecoming is it in their years ? *Temperate* : Moderate and prudent, one that governs well his passions and affections, so as not to be hurried away by them to any thing that is evil or indecent. *Sound in the faith*, i. e. sincere and stedfast, constantly adhering to the truth of the gospel, not fond of novelties, or ready to run into corrupt opinions, or parties, or to be taken with Jewish fables or traditions, or the dotages of their rabbins. The full of years should be full of grace and goodness, the *inner man* renewing more and more, as the *outer* decays. *In charity*, or love ; this is fitly joined with *faith*, which works by, and must be seen in, *love*, love to God and men, and soundness therein ; it must be sincere love, without dissimulation ; love of God for himself, and of men for God's sake, the duties of the second table must be done in virtue of those of the first ; love to men as men, and to the saints as the *excellent of the earth*, in whom must be special delight ; and love at all times, in adversity as well as prosperity : Thus must there be soundness in *charity* or love. And *in patience* : Aged persons are apt to be peevish, and fretful, and passionate ; and therefore need to be on their guard against such infirmities and temptations ; faith, and love, and patience, are three main Christian graces, and soundness in these is much of gospel perfection. There is *enduring* and *waiting patience*, both must be looked after ; to *bear evils* becomingly, and contentedly to *want the good* till we are fit for it, and it for us, being *followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises*. Thus as to the aged men.

[2.] To the aged women.

3. The aged women likewise, that *they be* in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things ;

These also must be instructed and warned. Some by these *aged women* understand the *deaconesses*, who were mostly employed in looking after the poor, and tending the sick ; but it is rather to be taken, as we render it, of all aged women professing religion, they must *be in behaviour as becometh holiness* ; both men and women must accommodate their behaviour to their profession ; those virtues before mentioned, *viz. Sobriety, gravity, temperance, soundness in the faith, and charity, and patience*, recommended to *aged men*, are not proper to them only, but applicable to both sexes, and to be looked to by *aged women* as well as men ; women are to hear and learn their duty from the word, as well as the men : there is not one way of salvation for one sex or sort, and another for another ; but both must learn and practise the same things, both as aged, and as Christians ; the virtues and duties are common. *The aged women likewise*, i. e. as well as the men, *be in behaviour as becometh holiness* ; or as becometh and is proper for holy persons, such as they profess to be, and should be ; keeping a pious decency and decorum in clothing and gesture, in looks and speech, and all other deportment ; and this from an inward principle and habit of holiness, influencing and ordering the outward carriage at all times. Observe, Though express scripture do not occur, or be not brought for every word, or look, or fashion in particular ; yet general rules there are, according to which all must be ordered. 1 Cor. x. 31. *Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God*. And Phil. iv. 8. *Whatever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things*. And here whatsoever things are becometh or unbecometh *holiness*, is a measure and rule of carriage to be looked to. *Not false accusers*, *μὴ διαλέγεις*, no calumniators or sowers of discord, slandering and back-biting their neighbours, a great and too common fault ; not only loving to speak, but to speak ill of people, and to separate very friends. A slanderer is *one whose tongue is set on fire of hell* : so much, and so directly do these do the devil's work, that for it the devil's name is given to such. This is a sin contrary to the great duties of love, and justice, and equity between one another ; it springs often from malice and hatred, or envy, and such like evil causes, to be shunned, as well as the effect. *Not given to much wine*, the word notes such addictedness thereto, as to be *under the power and mastery of it*. This is unseemly and evil in any, but especially in this sex and age, and too much to be found among the Greeks of that time and place. How immodest and shameful, corrupting

and destroying purity both of body and mind ? Of what evil example and tendency, unfitting for the next thing, which is a positive duty of aged matrons, *viz. to be teachers of good things* : Not publick preachers, that is forbidden, 1 Cor. xiv. 34. *I permit not a woman to speak in the church* ; but otherwise, teach they may and should, *viz. by example and good life* : Whence, Observe, Those, whose actions and carriage are as becomes holiness, are thereby *teachers of good things* ; and beside that, they may and should also teach by doctrinal instruction at home, and in a private way. Prov. xxxi. 1. *The words of king Lemuel, the prophecy his mother taught him*. Such a woman is praised, ver. 26. *She openeth her mouth with wisdom, and in her tongue is the law of kindness*. *Teachers of good things* is opposed to *things corrupt*, or to what is trifling and vain, of no good use or tendency ; old wives fables, or superstitious sayings and observances ; in opposition to these their business is, and they may be called on to it, to be *teachers of good things*. For,

[3.] There are lessons for young women also, which the aged women must teach, and instruct, and advise them in : The duties of religion according to their years.

4. That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children,
5. To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.

For teaching such things many times they have better access than the men, even than ministers have, and which therefore they must improve in instructing the young women, especially the young wives ; for he speaks of their duty to their husbands and children : These young women the more aged must teach,

(1.) To bear a good personal character, *viz. To be sober and discreet*, contrary to that *vanity and rashness* which younger years are subject to : *Discreet* in their judgments, and *sober* in their affections and carriage. *Discreet* and *chaste* stand well together, many expose themselves to fatal temptations, by that which at first might be but *indiscretion*. Prov. ii. 11. *Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee from the evil way*. *Chaste and keepers at home*, are well joined too. Dinah when she went to see the daughters of the land, lost her chastity. Those whose home is their prison, it is to be feared their chastity is their fetters. Not but occasions there are, and will be, of going abroad ; but a *gadding temper* for merriment and company sake, to the neglect of domestick affairs, or from uneasiness at being in her place, that is the opposite evil intended, which is commonly accompanied with, or draws after it other evils. 1 Tim. v. 13, 14. *They learn to be idle, wandering from house to house ; and not only idle, but tattlers also, and busy-bodies, speaking things which they ought not*. Their business is to *guide the house*, and *should give no occasion to the enemy to speak reproachfully*. Good, *viz. Generally*, in opposition to all vice ; and specially, in her place, kind, and helpful, and charitable, as Dorcas, *full of good works, and almsdeeds*. Also it may have, as some think, a more particular sense, one of a meek and yet cheerful spirit and temper, not sullen, or bitter, or taunting, or fretting and galling any ; not of a troublesome or jarring disposition, uneasy in herself, and to those about her ; but of a good nature and pleasing conversation, and likewise helpful by her advice and pains : Thus *building her house, and doing her husband good, and not evil all her days*. Thus in their personal character, *sober, discreet, chaste, keepers at home, and good* : And,

(2.) In their relative capacities, *to love their husbands, and to be obedient to them* : And where there is true love, this will be no difficult command. God in nature, and by his will, hath made this subordination. 1 Tim. ii. 12. *I suffer not a woman to usurp authority over the man* : and ver. 13. the reason is added, *For Adam was first formed then Eve. Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, was in the transgression* : She fell first, and was the means of seducing the husband. She was given to be an helper, but proved a most grievous hinderer, even the instrument of his fall and ruin, on which the bond of subjection was confirmed, and tied faster on her, Gen. iii. 16. *Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee*, *viz. with less easiness*, it may be, than before. It is therefore doubly enjoined : *First in innocency*, when was settled a subordination of nature, Adam being first formed, and then Eve, and the woman being taken out of the man ; and then upon the fall, the woman being first in the transgression, and seducing the man ; here now began to be a subjection not so easy and comfortable, being part of the penalty in her case, but yet through Christ is this nevertheless a sanctified state, Eph. v. 22. *Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord* ; as owning Christ's authority in them, whose image they bear ; for the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church : and he is the saviour of the body. God would have a resemblance of Christ's authority over the church, held forth in the husband's over the wife : Christ is the head of the church, to protect and save it, and to supply it with all good, and secure or deliver it from evil ; and so is the husband over the wife, to keep her from injuries, and to provide comfortably

comfortably for her, according to his ability: Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the *wives be unto their own husbands, as is fit in the Lord*, Col. iii. 18. i. e. as stands with the law of Christ, and is for his and the Father's glory. It is not then an absolute, or unlimited, or a slavish subjection that is required; but a loving subordination, to prevent disorder or confusion, and to further all the ends of the relation. Thus in reference unto the husbands, wives must be instructed in the duties of love and subjection to them. *And to love their children*, not with a natural affection only, but a spiritual; a love springing from an holy sanctified heart, and regulated by the word; not a fond foolish love, indulging them in evil, neglecting due reproof and correction where necessary; but it must be a regular Christian love shewing itself in their pious education, forming their life and manners aright, taking care of their souls, as well as of their bodies; of their spiritual welfare, as well as of their temporal; of the former chiefly and in the first place, the reason is added, *viz. That the word of God may not be blasphemed*. Failures in such relative duties would be greatly to the reproach of Christianity. What are these the better for this their new religion? would the infidels be ready to say. The word of God and gospel of Christ is pure, and excellent, and glorious in itself, and the excellency of it should be expressed and shewn in the lives and carriage of its professors, especially in relative duties; failures here bring disgrace. *Rom. ii. 24. The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you*. Judge what a God he is, would they be ready to say, by these his servants; and what his word, and doctrine, and religion is, by these his followers. Thus would Christ be wounded in the house of his friends. Thus of the duties of the younger women.

[4.] Here is the duty of young men.

6. Young men likewise exhort to be sober-minded.

They are apt to be eager and hot, thoughtless and precipitant; therefore must be earnestly called upon and exhorted to be considerate, not rash; advisable and submissive, not wilful and head-strong; humble and mild, not haughty and proud; for there are more young people ruined by pride, than by any other sin. The young in years should be grave and solid in their deportment and manners, joining the seriousness of age with the liveliness and vigour of youth. This will make even those younger years to pass to good purpose, and yield matter of comfortable reflexion, when the evil days come; it will be preventive of much sin and sorrow, and lay the ground for doing and enjoying much good. Such shall not *mourn at the last*, but have peace and comfort in death, and after it a glorious crown of life. Now with these instructions to Titus what he should teach others, the aged men and women, and the younger of both sexes, Titus himself probably at this time being a young man also, the apostle infers,

[5.] Some direction to himself. He could not expect so successfully to teach others, if he carried not himself well both in his conversation and preaching.

7. In all things shewing thy self a pattern of good works: in doctrine *shewing* uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, 8. Sound speech that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.

(1.) Here is direction for his conversation: *In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works*: Without this he would pull down with one hand, what he built with the other. Observe, Preachers of good works must be patterns of them also; good doctrine and good life must go together. *Thou that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?* A defect here is a great blemish, and a great hindrance. *In all things*; some read *above all things*, or *above all men*. Instructing and informing others in the particulars of their duty, is necessary, and above all things example, especially that of the teacher himself, is needful; hereby both light and influence is more likely to go together. Let them see a lively image of those virtues and graces in thy life, which must be in theirs. Example may both teach and impress the things taught; when they see purity and gravity, sobriety and all good life in thee, they may be more easily won and brought thereto themselves; they may become pious and holy, sober and righteous, as thou art. Ministers must be *examples to the flock*, and the people *followers of them, as they are of Christ*. And here is direction,

(2.) For his teaching and doctrine, as well as for his life: *In doctrine, shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech that cannot be condemned*. They must make it appear that the design of their preaching is purely to advance the honour of God, and interest of Christ and his kingdom, and the welfare and happiness of souls; that it was not with secular views this office was entered into, or is used; not from ambition or covetousness, but a pure aim at the spiritual ends of its institution. In their preaching therefore the display of wit, or parts, or of human learning, or oratory, is not to be affected; but *sound speech* must

be used, *which cannot be condemned*. Scripture language, as far as well may be, in expressing scripture truths. This is *sound speech that cannot be condemned*. We have more than once these duties of a minister set together, 1 Tim. iv. 16. *Take heed to thyself, and to thy doctrine*: and ver. 12. of the same chapter, *Let no man despise thy youth, but be thou an example of believers in word*. In thy speech, as a Christian, being grave and serious, and to the use of edifying; and in thy preaching, that it be the pure word of God, or what is agreeable to it, and founded on it; thus be an example *in word*: And *in conversation*; the life corresponding with the doctrine. In doing this *thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee*. In 2 Tim. iii. 10. *Thou hast fully known my doctrine and manner of life*, saith the same apostle, *viz. how agreeable these have been*. And so must it be with others; their teaching must be agreeable with the word, and their life with their teaching. This is the true and good minister, 1 Thess. ii. 9, 10. *Labouring night and day, we preached to you the gospel of God; and ye are our witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly, and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you*. This must be looked to, as the next words shew: Which are,

(3.) The reason both for the strictness of the minister's life, and the gravity and soundness of his preaching: *That he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you*. Adversaries would be seeking occasion to reflect, and would do so, could they find any thing amiss in doctrine or life; but if both were right and good, such ministers might set calumny itself at defiance; they would have no evil thing to say justly, and so must be ashamed of their opposition. Observe, Faithful ministers will have enemies watching for their halting; such as will endeavour to find, or pick holes in their teaching or behaviour; the more need therefore for them to look to themselves, that no just occasion be found against them. Opposition and calumny perhaps may not be escaped, men of corrupt minds will resist the truth, and often reproach the preachers and professors of it; but let them see, that *with well-doing, they put to silence the ignorance of foolish men*; that *when they speak evil of them as evil doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse their good conversation in Christ*. This is the direction to Titus himself, and so of the duties of free persons, male and female, old and young. Then follows:

[6.] The directions respecting servants.

9. Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again, 10. Not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

Servants may not think their mean and low state puts them beneath God's notice, or the obligation of his laws; that because they are servants of men, they are thereby discharged from serving of God. No, servants must know, and do their duty to their earthly masters, but with an eye to their heavenly one: and Titus must not only instruct and warn earthly masters of their duties, but servants also of theirs, both in his public preaching, and private admonitions. Servants must attend the ordinances of God for their instruction and comfort, as well as the masters themselves. In this direction to Titus there are the duties themselves, to which he must exhort servants, and a weighty consideration, wherewith he was to enforce them.

(1.) The duties themselves are these:

(1.) *To be obedient to their own masters*. This is the prime duty, that by which they are characterized, *Rom. vi. His servants ye are, to whom ye obey*. There must be inward subjection, and dutiful respect and reverence in the mind and thoughts. *If I be a master, where is my fear?* saith God, i. e. the dutiful affection you shew to me, together with the suitable outward significations and expressions of it, in doing what I command you. This must be in servants, their will must be subject to their masters will, and their time and labour at their masters dispose and command. 1 Pet. ii. 18. *Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the forward*. The duty results from the will of God, and the relation in which, by his providence, he hath put such; not from the quality of the person: If he be a *master*, the duties of a *servant* are to be paid to him as such. Servants therefore are to be exhorted to be obedient to their own masters. And,

(2.) *To please them well in all things*, i. e. in all lawful things, and such as belong to them to command; or at least as are not contrary to the will of their great and superior Lord. We are not to understand it either of obeying or pleasing them absolutely, without any limitation; but always with a reserve of God's right, which may in no case be intrenched upon. If his command and the earthly master's come in competition, we are instructed to *obey God rather than man*; but servants then must be upon good grounds in this, that there is an inconsistency, else are they not held to be excused: And not only must the will of God be the measure of the servant's obedience, but the reason of it also; all must be done with a respect to him, and in virtue of his authority, and for pleasing him primarily and chiefly, Col. iii. 22, 23, 24. *Servants obey in all things your masters, according to the Lord; not*

with

with eye-services, as men-pleasers; but with singleness of heart, fearing God. And whatever ye do, do it heartily as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance; for ye serve the Lord Christ. In serving the earthly master according to Christ's will, he is served; and such shall be rewarded by him accordingly.

But, *Quest.* How are servants to please their masters in all things, and yet not be men-pleasers? *Ans.* Men-pleasers in the faulty sense are such as eye men alone, or chiefly, in what they do, leaving God out, or subordinating him to man: when the will of man shall carry it, though against God's will, or man's pleasure is more regarded than his: when that can content them, that the earthly master is pleased, though God be displeased; or more care, or more satisfaction is taken in man's being pleased, than in God's: this is sinful man-pleasing, which all must take heed of. *Eph. vi. 5, 6, 7. Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters, according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, with singleness of your heart, as unto Christ: Not with eye-service as men-pleasers, who look at nothing but the favour or displeasure of men, or nothing so much as that; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service as to the Lord, and not to men, viz. Not to them chiefly, but to Christ who requires, and who will reward any good done, whether by bond or free. Observe therefore, Christian liberty stands well with civil servitude and subjection. Persons may serve men, and yet be the servants of Christ; these are not contrary, but subordinate; so far as serving men is according to Christ's will, and for his sake. Christ came not to destroy or prejudice civil order and differences: Art thou called being a servant? Care not for it, 1 Cor. vii. 21. Let not that trouble thee, as if it were a condition unworthy of a Christian, or wherein the person so called is less pleasing unto God; for he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman, not free from that service, but free in it; free spiritually, though not in a civil sense: Likewise also he that is called being free, is Christ's servant, he is bound to him, though he be not under civil subjection to any: So that bound or free, all are one in Christ. Servants therefore should not regret, or be troubled at their condition, but be faithful and cheerful in the station wherein God hath set them; striving to please their masters in all things: Hard it may be under some churlish Nabals, but must be endeavoured all that they are able.*

(3.) *Not answering again*, not contradicting them, or disputing it with them; not giving them any disrespectful, or provoking language. Job complained of his servants, that he called them, and they gave him no answer: and that was faulty another way: *Non respondere pro convitio est*, such silence is contempt; but here it is respect, rather to take a check or reproof with humble silence, not making any confident or bold replies. When conscious of a fault, to palliate or stand in justification of it, doubles it. Yet this not answering again excludes not *turning away wrath with a soft answer*, when season and circumstances admit. God and wise masters will be ready to hear, and do right; but answering unseasonably, or in an unseemly manner, or where the case admits not excuse, to be pert or confident, shews want of such humility and meekness, which such relation requires.

(4.) *Not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity.* This is another great essential of good servants, to be *honest*; never converting that to their own use, which is their masters, nor wasting the goods they are intrusted with: that is *purloining*. They must be just and true, and do for them, as they would or should for themselves. *Prov. xxviii. 24. Whoso robbeth his father or his mother, and saith it is no transgression, the same is the companion of a destroyer*: he will be ready to join with them. Thus having such light thoughts of taking beyond what is right, though it be from a parent or master, is like to harden conscience to go further; it is both wicked in itself, and it tends to more. Be it so that the master is hard and strait, scarce making sufficient provision for servants; yet may they not be their own carvers, or go about by theft to right themselves; they must bear their lot, committing their cause to God for righting and providing for them. I speak not of cases of extremity, for preserving life, the necessities for which the servant hath a right to. *Not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity*; he must not only not steal or waste; but must improve his master's goods, and promote his prosperity and thriving what he can. He that increased not his master's talent, is accused of unfaithfulness, though he had not embezzelled, or lost it. Faithfulness in a servant lies in ready, punctual, and thorough executing his master's orders; keeping his secrets and counsels, dispatching his affairs, and managing with frugality, and to as much just advantage for his master as he is able; looking well to his trusts, and preventing what he can all spoil, or loss, or damage. This is a way to bring a blessing upon himself, as the contrary often brings utter ruin. *Luke xvi. 12. If thou have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?* Thus of the duties themselves, to which servants are to be exhorted. Then,

(2.) Here is the consideration with which Titus was to enforce them. *That they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things*; i. e. that they may recommend the gospel, and Christ's holy religion, to the good opinion of them that are without, by

their meek, humble, obedient, and faithful carriage in all things. Even servants, though they may think that such as they in so low and inferior a condition, can do little to bring repute to Christianity, or adorn the doctrine of Christ, and set forth the excellencies of his truth and ways; yet if they are careful to do their duty, it will redound to the glory of God, and credit of religion. The unbelieving masters would think the better of that despised way, which was every where spoken against, when they found that their servants, which were Christians, were better than their other servants; more obedient and submissive, more just and faithful, and diligent in their places. True religion is an honour to the professors of it; and they should see that they do not any dishonour to it, but adorn it rather in all that they are able. Our light must shine among men, so that they seeing our good works, may glorify our Father which is in heaven. And thus of the apostle's directions to Titus, about the discharge of his office, in reference to several sorts of persons. Next follow,

(3.) The grounds or considerations upon which all the directions are urged, taken from the nature and design of the gospel, and the end of Christ's death.

11. For the grace of God that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men; 12. Teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; 13. Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ: 14. Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

[1.] Here are motives from the nature and design of the gospel. Let young, and old; men, and women; masters, and servants; and Titus himself. Let all sorts do their respective duties, for this is the very aim and business of Christianity, to instruct, and help, and form persons under all distinctions and relations, to a right frame and carriage. For this,

(1.) They are put under the dispensation of *the grace of God*, so the gospel is called, *Eph. iii. 2.* It is *grace* in respect of the spring of it, the free favour and good will of God, not any merit or desert in the creature, and as manifesting and declaring this good will in an eminent and signal manner; and as it is the means of conveying and working grace in the hearts of believers. Now grace is obliging and constraining to goodness: *Let not sin reign, but yield yourselves unto God; for you are not under the law, but under grace, Rom. vi. 12, 13, 14. The love of Christ constrains us, viz. not to live to self, but to him, 2 Cor. v. 14, 15.* without this effect, grace is received in vain.

(2.) This gospel grace *brings salvation*; it reveals, and offers, and ensures it to believers. Salvation from sin and wrath, from death and hell; whence it is called the word of life; it brings to faith, and so to life: the life of holiness now, and of happiness hereafter. The law is the ministration of death, but the gospel the ministration of life and peace. This therefore must be received as salvation, its rules minded, its commands obeyed, that the end of it may be obtained, *the salvation of the soul*. And more inexcusable will the neglecters of this grace of God bringing salvation now be, since

(3.) *It hath appeared*, or shone out, viz. more clearly and illustriously than ever before. The old dispensation was comparatively dark and shadowy; this is a clear and shining light; and as it is now more bright, so more diffused and extensive also. For,

(4.) *It hath appeared unto all men*; not to the Jews only, as the glory of God appeared at mount Sinai to that particular people, but out of the ken of all others; but gospel grace is open to all, and all are invited to come and partake of the benefit of it; Gentiles as well as Jews. The publication of it is free and general. *Disciple all nations: Preach the gospel to every creature.* The pale is broken down, there is no such inclosure now as formerly. *Rom. xvi. 26. The preaching of Jesus Christ, which was kept secret since the world began, now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith.* The doctrine of grace and salvation by the gospel is for all ranks and conditions of men; slaves and servants, as well as masters; therefore engaging and encouraging all to receive and believe it, and walk suitable to it, adorning it in all things.

(5.) This gospel revelation is to *teach*, and not by way of information and instruction only, as a schoolmaster does his scholars; but by way of precept and command, as a sovereign that gives laws unto his subjects. It directs what to shun, and what to follow; what to avoid, and what to do. The gospel is not for speculation only or chiefly, but for practice and right ordering of life. It teaches,

(1.) To abandon sin: *Denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts*; to renounce and have no more to do with these, as we have had. *Put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt*; i. e. the whole body of sins, distributed here into ungodliness

ungodliness and *worldly lusts*. Put away *ungodliness* and irreligion, all unbelief, neglect or disesteem of the divine being, not loving, or fearing, or trusting in him, or obeying him as we should, neglecting his ordinances, slighting his worship, profaning his name or day, &c. Thus *deny ungodliness*, i. e. hate and put it away. And *worldly lusts*; all corrupt and vicious desires and affections that prevail in worldly men, and carry out to worldly things: *The lusts of the flesh, and of the eye, and the pride of life*; all sensuality and filthiness, covetous desires and ambition, seeking and valuing more the praise of men than of God; put away all these. An earthly sensual conversation suits not an heavenly calling. *They that are Christ's, have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts*. They have done it by covenant-engagement and promise, and have initially and prevailingly done it in act; and are going on in the work, cleansing themselves more and more from all filthiness of flesh and spirit. Thus the gospel first unteaches that which is evil, to abandon sin; and then,

(2.) To make conscience of that which is good. *To live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world*. Religion is not made up of negatives only, there must be doing good, as well as eschewing evil; in these conjunctly is sincerity proved, and the gospel adorned. We should live *soberly* with respect to ourselves, in the due government of our appetites and passions, keeping the limits of moderation and temperance, avoiding all inordinate excesses. *Righteously* towards all men; rendering to all their due, and injuring none, but rather doing good to others according to our ability and their need. This seems a part of justice and righteousness, for we are not born for ourselves alone, and therefore may not live only to ourselves. *We are members one of another, and must seek every man another's wealth*; 1 Cor. x. 24. and chap. xii. 25. The publick, especially, which includes the interests of all, must have the regards of all. *Selfishness* is a sort of *unrighteousness*, it robs others of that share in us, which is their due. How amiable then will a just and righteous carriage be? It secures and promotes all interests, not particular only, but general and publick, and so makes for the peace and happiness of the world. Live *righteously* therefore as well as *soberly*. And *godly* towards God, in the duties of his worship and service. Regards to him indeed should run through all, 1 Cor. x. 31. *Whether ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God*. Personal and relative duties must be done in obedience to his command, with due aim at pleasing and honouring him, from principles of holy love and fear of him. But there is an express and direct duty also, that we owe to God, *viz.* Belief and acknowledgment of his being and perfections, paying him internal and external worship and homage; loving, and fearing, and trusting in him, and depending on him, and devoting ourselves to him, observing all those religious duties and ordinances that he hath appointed, praying to him, and praising of him, meditating on his word and works. This is *godliness*, looking and coming to God, as our state now is, not immediately, but as he has manifested himself in Christ; so does the gospel direct and require. To go to God any other way, *viz.* by saints or angels, is unsuitable, yea, contrary to the gospel rule and warrant. All communications from God to us, are through his Son, and our returns must also be by him. God in Christ we must look at, as the object of our hope and worship. Thus must we *exercise ourselves to godliness*, without which there can be no adorning that gospel, which is according to it, which teaches and requires such a deportment. A gospel conversation must needs be a godly conversation, expressing our love, and fear, and reverence of God; our hope, and trust, and confidence in him, as manifested in his Son. *We are the circumcision, who have in truth what was signified by that sacrament, who worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh*. See in how little a compass our duty is comprized; it is put into a few words, *denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and living soberly, righteously and godly in this present world*. The gospel teaches us not only how to believe and hope well, but also to live well, as becomes that faith and hope in *this present world*, but as expectants of *another and better*. There is the *world that now is*, and *that which is to come*, the *present* is the time and place of our trial, and the gospel teaches us to live well *here*, but not as our final state, but with an eye chiefly to a *future*. For,

(3.) It teaches in all to look for the glories of another world, to which the sober, righteous, and godly life in this is preparative: *Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ*. Hope, by a metonymy, is put for the thing hoped for, *viz.* Heaven and the felicities thereof, called emphatically *that hope*, because it is the great thing we look, and long, and wait for; and a *blessed hope*, because when attained, we shall be compleatly happy for ever. *And the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ*. This notes both the time of the accomplishing our hope, and the sureness and greatness of it; it will be at the second appearing of Christ, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels, Luke ix. 26. His own glory, which he had before the world was; and his Father's, being the express image of his person, and as God-man, his de-

legated ruler and judge; and of the holy angels, as his ministers and glorious attendants. His first coming was in meanness, to satisfy justice, and purchase happiness; his second will be in majesty to bestow, and instate his people in it. *Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation*, Heb. ix. 28. *The great God and our Saviour* (or *even our Saviour*) *Jesus Christ*; for they are not two subjects, but one only, as appears by the single article, *ὁ μὲν ἄλλος θεὸς καὶ σωτὴρ*, not *καὶ ὁ ἄλλος*, and so is *καὶ* rendered, 1 Cor. xv. 24. *When he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father*; *τῷ θεῷ καὶ πατρί*. Christ then is the *great God*, not figuratively, as magistrates and others are sometimes called gods, or as appearing and acting in the name of God, but properly and absolutely *the true God*, 1 John v. 20. *The mighty God*, Isa. ix. 6. *Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God*, Phil. ii. 6. In his second coming he will reward his servants, and bring them to glory with him, 1. Observe, There is a common and blessed hope for all true Christians in the other world. *If in this life only they had hope in Christ, they were of all men the most miserable*, 1 Cor. xv. 19. By hope is meant the thing hoped for, *viz.* Christ himself who is called *our hope*, 1 Tim. i. 1. and blessedness in and through him, even riches of glory, Eph. i. 18. Hence fitly termed here *that blessed hope*. 2. Observe, The design of the gospel is to stir up all to a good life, by this blessed hope, 1 Pet. i. 13. *Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ*. To the same purpose here, *denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world, looking for the blessed hope*; not as mercenaries, but as dutiful and thankful Christians. *What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hastening to the coming of the day of God*, 2 Pet. iii. 11, 12. *Looking and hastening*, i. e. expecting and diligently preparing for it. 3. Observe, At and in the glorious appearing of Christ will the blessed hope of Christians be attained; for their felicity will be that, *To be where he is, and to behold his glory*, John xvii. 24. The glory of the *great God and our Saviour* will then break out as the sun: Though in the exercise of his judiciary power he will appear as *the Son of Man*, yet will he be mightily declared to be the *Son of God* too: The divinity that on earth was much veiled, will shine out then as the sun in its strength. Hence the work and design of the gospel is to raise the heart to wait for this second appearing of Christ. *We are begotten again to a lively hope of it*, 1 Pet. i. 3. *turned to serve the living God, and wait for his Son from heaven*, 1 Thess. i. 10. Christians are marked by this, *expecting their master's coming*, Matt. xxiv. 45. *Loving his appearance*, 2 Tim. iv. 8. Look we then to this hope; let our loins be girt, and our lights burning, and ourselves like those that wait for our Lord; the day or hour we know not, but *he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry*, Heb. x. 37. 4. Observe, The comfort and joy of Christians is, that their Saviour is *the great God*, and will gloriously manifest himself at his second coming. Power and love, majesty and mercy, will then appear together in highest lustre, to the terror and confusion of the wicked; but to the everlasting triumph and rejoicing of the godly. Were he not thus *the great God*, and not a meer creature, he could not be *their Saviour*, nor *their hope*. Thus of the considerations to enforce the directions for all sorts to their respective duties, from the nature and design of the gospel, which is to teach and persuade to those things. And herewith is connected another ground, *viz.*

[2.] From the end of Christ's death. *ver. 14. Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works*. To bring us to holiness and happiness was the end of Christ's death, as well as the scope of his doctrine. Here we have,

(1.) The purchaser of salvation, *Who*, i. e. Jesus Christ, *that great God and our Saviour*, who saves not simply *as God*, much less *as man* alone; but *as God-man*, two natures in one person: *Man*, that he might obey, and suffer, and dye for *man*, and be meet to deal with him and for him; and *God*, that he might support the manhood, and give worth and efficacy to his undertakings, and have due regard to the rights and honour of the Deity, as well as the good of his creature, and bring about the latter to the glory of the former. Such an one became us, and this was,

(2.) The price of our redemption. *He gave himself*; the Father gave him, but he gave himself too; and in the freeness and voluntariness, as well as the greatness of the offering, lay the acceptableness and merit of it. *John x. 17, 18. Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself*. So *John xvii. 19. For their sakes I sanctify myself*, i. e. separate and devote myself to this work, to be both a priest and a sacrifice to God for the sins of men. The human nature was the offering, and the divine the altar, sanctifying the guilt, and the whole the act of the person. *He gave himself a ransom for all*, 1 Tim. ii. 6. *Once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself*. He was the priest and sacrifice too. *We are redeemed*

redeemed not with silver and gold, but the precious blood of Christ, 1 Pet. i. 18, 19. called the blood of God, Acts xx. 28. i. e. of him who is God.

(3.) The persons for whom. *For us*, viz. poor perishing sinners, gone off from God, and turned rebels against him. He gave himself *for us*, not only for our good, but in our stead. Messiah was cut off *not for himself*, but for us: *He suffered, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God*, 1 Pet. iii. 18. He *was made sin for us*, i. e. an offering and sacrifice for sin; *that we might be made the righteousness of God in him*, 2 Cor. v. 21. Wonderful condescension and grace! *He loved us, and gave himself for us*; what can we do less than love and give up ourselves to him? Especially considering,

(4.) The ends of his giving himself for us, viz.

(1.) *That he might redeem us from all iniquity*. This is fitted to the first lesson, *denying ungodliness and worldly lusts*: Christ gave himself to redeem us from these, therefore put them away. To love and live in sin, is to trample under foot redeeming blood, to despise and reject one of the greatest benefits of it, and to act counter to its design.

But, *Quest.* How could the short sufferings of Christ redeem us from all iniquity? *Answ.* Through the infinite dignity of his person: He, who was God, suffered though not as God. The acts and properties of either nature are attributed to the person. *God purchased his church with his own blood*, Acts xx. 28. Could payment be made at once, no need of suffering for ever. A meer creature could not do this, from the finiteness of his nature; but God-man could. *The great God and our Saviour, gave himself for us*: that accounts for it. *By one offering he hath for ever perfected them that are sanctified*, Heb. ix. 25, 26. He needed not to offer himself often, nor could he be holden of death, when he had once undergone it. Happy end and fruit of Christ's death, redemption from all iniquity! Christ died for this: And,

(2.) *To purify to himself a peculiar people*. This enforces the second lesson: *To live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world*. Christ died to purify, as well as to pardon; to obtain grace, to heal the nature, as well as to free from guilt and condemnation. He gave himself for his church *to cleanse it*. Thus does he make *to himself a peculiar people*, by purifying of them. Thus are they distinguished from the world, that lies in wickedness; they are born of God, and assimilated to him, bear his image, are holy as their heavenly Father is holy. Observe, Redemption from sin, and sanctification of the nature, go together, and both make a peculiar people unto God: Freedom from guilt and condemnation, and from the power of lusts, and purification of soul by the Spirit. These are *a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, and so a peculiar people*. And,

(3.) *Zealous of good works*. This peculiar people, as they are made so by grace purifying them; so must they be seen to be so, by doing good, and a zeal therein. Observe, The gospel is not a doctrine of licentiousness, but of holiness and good life: We are redeemed from our vain conversation, to serve God *in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life*. See we then that we do good, and have zeal in it; only looking that zeal be guided by knowledge, and spirited with love, directed to the glory of God, and always in some good thing. And thus of the motive to the duties directed, from the end of Christ's death. Then,

(4.) The apostle closeth the chapter, as he began it, with a summary direction to Titus upon the whole.

15. These things speak and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee.

Here is the matter and manner of ministers teaching, and a special instruction to Titus in reference to himself.

[1.] The matter of ministers teaching: *These things*, viz. the before-mentioned: Not Jewish fables, and traditions; but the truths and duties of the gospel, of *avoiding sin, and living soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world*. Observe, Ministers in their preaching must keep close to the word of God, 1 Pet. iv. 11. *If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God*, and not the figments and inventions of his own brain.

[2.] The manner, viz. by *doctrine, and exhortation, and reproof with all authority*, 2 Tim. iii. 16. *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness*, i. e. to teach sound doctrine, to convince of sin, and refute error, to reform the life, and to carry forward in what is just and good, *that the man of God, Christian or minister, may be perfect, thoroughly furnished to all good works*, viz. that are to be practised by himself, or to be taught others. Here is what will furnish for all parts of his duty, and the right discharge of them. *These things speak*, or teach; shun not to declare the whole counsel of God. The great and necessary truths and duties of the gospel, especially, these *speak and exhort, reprove, press with much earnestness*. Ministers must not be cold and lifeless in delivering heavenly doctrine and precepts, as if they were indifferent things or of little concern; but they must urge them with earnestness suitable to their nature and importance; they must call upon persons to mind and heed, and not be hearers only, *deceiving themselves*; but *doers of the word, that they may be blessed therein*. And rebuke, convince and reprove such

as contradict or gain-say, or neglect and receive not the truth as they should, or retain it in unrighteousness; those who hear it not with such a believing and obedient mind and heart as they ought, but instead of that, it may be, live in contrary practices, shewing themselves stubborn and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate. Rebuke *with all authority*, as coming in the name of God, and armed with his threatnings and discipline, which whoever make light of, at their peril it will be. Ministers are reprovers in the gate.

[3.] Here is a special instruction to Titus in reference to himself: *Let no man despise thee*, i. e. give no occasion to do so, nor suffer it without reproof, considering *he that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God*. Or, thus *speak, and exhort, these things*; press them upon all, as they may respectively be concerned; with boldness and faithfulness reprove sin; and carefully look to thyself, and thy own carriage, and then none will despise thee. The most effectual way for ministers to secure themselves from contempt, is to keep close to the doctrine of Christ, and imitate his example; to preach and live well, and do their duty with prudence and courage; this will best preserve both their reputation and comfort.

Perhaps too an admonition might be here intended to the people; that Titus, though young, and but a substitute of the apostle, yet should not be contemned by them; but considered and respected as a faithful minister of Christ, and encouraged and supported in his work and office, 1 Thes. v. 12, 13. *Know them that labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and esteem them very highly in love, for their works sake*. Mind their teaching, respect their persons, support them in their function, and what in you lies, further their endeavours for the honour of God, and the salvation of souls.

CHAP. III.

Of duties which concern Christians more in common, and the reasons of them, ver. 1—8. What Titus in teaching should avoid, and how he should deal with an heretick, with some other directions, ver. 9—14. And salutations in the close, ver. 15.

1. **P**UT them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work. 2. To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men.

4. Here is the fourth thing in the matter of the epistle. The apostle had directed Titus in reference to the particular and special duties of several sorts of persons; now he bids him exhort to what concerned them more in common, viz. to quietness and submission to rulers, and readiness to do good, and to equitable and gentle behaviour towards all men: Things comely and ornamental of religion; he must therefore put them in mind of such things. Ministers are peoples remembrancers of their duty. As they are remembrancers for the people to God in prayers, *1 Jo. ixii. 6*. so are they from God to them in preaching, 2 Pet. i. 12. *I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance*. Forgetfulness of duty is a common frailty; there is need therefore of minding and quickening them thereto. Here are the duties themselves, and the reasons of them.

(1.) The duties themselves, which they were to be minded of.

[1.] *Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates*. Magistracy is God's ordinance for the good of all, and therefore must be regarded and submitted to by all; not for wrath and by force only, but willingly and for conscience sake. *Principalities, and powers and magistrates*, i. e. all civil rulers, whether supreme and chief, or subordinate in the government under which they live, of whatever form it be, that they be *subject* to them and obey them, viz. in things lawful and honest, and that belong to their office to require. The Christian religion was misrepresented by its adversaries, as prejudicial to the rights of princes and civil powers and tending to faction, and sedition, and to rebellion against lawful authority; therefore *to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men*, and stop the mouths of malicious enemies, Christians must be minded to shew themselves examples rather of all due subjection and obedience to the government that is over them. Natural desire of liberty must be guided and bounded by reason, and scripture. Spiritual privileges do not make void or weaken, but confirm and strengthen their obligations to civil duties: Mind them therefore, *to be subject to principalities and powers, and to obey magistrates*. And,

[2.] *To be ready to every good work*. Some refer this to such good works as are required by magistrates, and within their sphere; whatever tends to good order, and to promote and secure publick tranquillity and peace, be not backward but ready to promote such things. But though this be included, if not first intended, yet is it not to be hereto restrained: It respects doing good in all kinds, and on every occasion that may offer, whether respecting God, ourselves, or our neighbour; what may bring credit

credit to religion in the world. *Whatever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report; if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on those things*, Phil. iv. 8. viz. to do and follow, and further them. Meer harmlessness, or good words, and good meanings only, are not enough without good works. *Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and the widow in their affliction, and keep unspotted from the world*: Not only take, but seek occasion for doing good, keep fitness and readiness that way, put it not off to others, but embrace and lay hold on it thyself, delight and rejoice therein, put all in mind of this. And,

[3.] *To speak evil of no man*: *μὴ δὲ να βλασφημεῖν*, to revile, or curse, or blaspheme none: or (as our translation more generally) *to speak evil of none*, unjustly, and falsely, or unnecessarily, without call, and when it may do hurt, but no good to the person himself or any other. If no good can be spoken, rather than speak evil unnecessarily, say nothing. We must never take pleasure in speaking ill of others, or make the worst of any thing, but the best that we can. We must not go up and down as tale-bearers, carrying ill natured stories, to the prejudice of our neighbours good name, and destruction of brotherly love. Misrepresentations or ill insinuations of bad intent, or of hypocrisy in what is done, things out of our reach, or cognizance, these come within the reach of this prohibition. An evil this is, as too common, so of great malignity. *Jam. i. 26. If any man seemeth to be religious and bridleth not his tongue, that man's religion is vain*: Such loose uncharitable talk is displeasing to God, and hurtful among men, *Prov. xvii. 9. He that covereth a transgression seeketh love*, viz. to himself by this tenderness and charity; or rather to the transgressor; but he that repeateth a matter, who blazes and tells the faults of another abroad, separateth very friends, he raiseth dissensions, and alienates his friend from himself and perhaps from others: This is among the sins to be put off, *Eph. iv. 31.* or if indulged, unfit for Christian communion here, and the society of the blessed in heaven, *1 Cor. vi. 10.* Mind them therefore to avoid this. And,

[4.] *To be no brawlers*: *ἀμάχους εἶναι*, no fighters either with hand or tongue, i. e. no quarrelsome contentious persons, apt to give or return ill and provoking language. An holy contending there is for matters good and important, and in a manner suitable and becoming, not with wrath or injurious violence. Christians must follow the things that make for peace, and that in a peaceful not a rough, and boisterous, and hurtful way, but as becomes the servants of the God of peace and love. *Rom. xii. 19. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath*, this is the Christian's wisdom and duty. *The glory of a man is to pass over a transgression*; of a reasonable, and therefore to be sure of a Christian man, whose reason is improved and advanced by religion; such may not, will not presently fall foul on one that hath offended him; but like God will be slow to anger, and ready to forgive. Contention and strife arises from mens lusts, and exorbitant, unruly passions, which must be curbed and moderated, not indulged; and Christians need to be minded of these things, that they do not by a wrathful contentious spirit and carriage, displease and dishonour God, and discredit religion, promoting feuds in the places where they live. *He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty*, and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city. Wherefore it follows,

[5.] *But gentle*: *ἐπιεικής*, equitable, and just, or candid and fair in constructions of things, not taking words or actions in the worst sense, and for peace sometimes yielding somewhat of strict right. And,

[6.] *Shewing all meekness to all men*. We must be of a mild disposition, and not only having meekness in our hearts, but shewing it in our speeches and carriage. *All meekness*, i. e. meekness in all instances and occasions, not towards friends only, but to all men, though still with wisdom, as James admonishes, *chap. iii. 13.* distinguish the person and the sin, pity the one, and hate the other; and of sin and sin, look not on all alike, there are notes and beams; and of sinner and sinner, of some have compassion, others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, thus making a difference, *Jude 22, 23.* Mind these things, the wisdom that is from above is pure and peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated. Meekness of spirit and carriage renders religion amiable; it is a commanded imitation of Christ the grand exemplar, and what brings its own reward with it, in the ease and comfort of the disposition itself, and the blessings accompanying of it. These shall be glad and rejoice, shall be taught and guided in their way, and satisfied with bread, and beautified with salvation. Thus of the duties themselves, which Titus was to put people in mind of: for which,

(2.) He adds the reasons,

[1.] From their own past condition, which he next describes.

3. For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.

Observe, Consideration of men's natural condition is a great means and ground of equity, and gentleness, and all meekness towards those who are yet in such a state: This hath aptness to abate pride, and work pity and hope in reference to those who are yet unconverted; we ourselves also were so and so corrupt and sinful, therefore we should not be impatient and bitter; hard and severe toward those, who are but as ourselves once were. Would we then have been contemned, and proudly and rigorously dealt with? No, but would have been treated with gentleness and humanity, and therefore should we now so treat those who are unconverted, according to that rule of equity; *Quod tibi non vis fieri, alteri ne feceris*; what you would not have done to you, that do not you to another? Their past natural condition is set forth in divers particulars. *We ourselves also were sometimes*,

(1.) *Foolish*, without true spiritual understanding and knowledge, ignorant of heavenly things. Observe, They should be most disposed to bear with others follies, who may remember many of their own; they should be meek, and gentle, and patient toward them, who once needed, and doubtless then expected the same. *We ourselves also were sometimes foolish*. And,

(2.) *Disobedient*, heady and unperfwadable, resisting the word, and rebellious, even against the natural laws of God, and those which human society requires. Well are these set together, *foolish and disobedient*. For what folly like this, to disobey God and his laws, natural or revealed? This is contrary to right reason, and men's true and greatest interests; and what so foolish as to violate and go counter to these?

(3.) *Deceived*, or wandering, viz. out of the ways of truth and holiness. Man in this his degenerate state, is of a straying nature, thence compared to a *lost sheep*; this must be sought and brought back, and guided in the right way, *Psalm cxix. 176.* He is weak, and ready to be imposed upon by the wiles and subtilties of Satan, and of men lying in wait to seduce and mislead.

(4.) *Serving divers lusts and pleasures*, viz. as vassals and slaves under them. 1. Observe, Men deceived are easily entangled and ensnared; they would not otherwise serve divers lusts and pleasures, as they do, were they not blinded and beguiled into it. See here too, what a different notion the word gives of a sensual and fleshly life, from what the world generally hath of it. Carnal people think they enjoy their pleasures; the word calls it servitude and vassalage, they are very drudges and bond-slaves under them; so far are they from freedom and felicity in them, that they are captivated by them, and serve them as task-masters and tyrants. 2. Observe, It is the misery of the servants of sin, that they have many masters: One lust hurrying them one way, and another another; pride commands one things, covetousness another, and often a contrary. What vile slaves are sinners, while they conceit themselves free? The lusts that tempt them promise them liberty, but in yielding they become the servants of corruption; for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought into bondage.

(5.) *Living in malice*, one of those lusts that bear rule in them. Malice desires hurt to another, and rejoices in it.

(6.) *And envy*, which grudges and repines at another's good, frets at his prosperity and success in any thing: Both roots of bitterness, whence many evils spring; evil thoughts and speeches, tongues set on fire of hell, detracting from and impairing the just and due praises of others. *Their words are swords* wherewith they slay the good name and honour of their neighbour; the sin of Satan and of Cain, who was of that evil one, and slew his brother: And wherefore slew he him, but of this envy and malice? *Because his own works were evil and his brother's righteous*. These were some of the sins in which we lived in our natural state. And,

(7.) *Hateful*, or odious, deserving to be hated.

(8.) *And hating one another*. Observe, Those that are sinful, i. e. living and allowing themselves in sin, are hateful to God and all good men. Their temper and ways are so, though not simply their persons: And it is the misery of sinners that they hate one another, as it is the duty and happiness of saints to love one another. What contentions and quarrels flow from men's corruptions? Such as were in the nature of those that by conversion are now good, but in their unconverted state made them ready to run like furious wild beasts one upon another. The consideration of its having been thus with us, should moderate our spirits, and dispose us to be more equal and gentle, meek and tender-hearted toward those who are such. This is the argument from their own past condition here described. And he reasons,

[2.] From their present state. We are delivered out of that our miserable condition, by no merit or strength of our own; but only by the mercy and free grace of God, and merit of Christ, and operation of his Spirit: Therefore have no ground, in respect of ourselves, to condemn those who are yet unconverted, but rather to pity them, and cherish hope concerning them, that they, though in themselves as unworthy and unmeet as we were, yet may obtain mercy, as we have: and so upon this occasion the apostle again opens the causes of our salvation, *ver. 4—7.*

4. But

4. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, 5. Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the holy Ghost; 6. Which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour: 7. That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

(1.) We have here the prime author of our salvation, viz. God the Father, therefore termed here *God our Saviour*. 2 Cor. v. 18. *All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ*. All things belonging to the new creation, and recovery of fallen man to life and happiness, of which he is there speaking, all these things are of *God the Father*, as contriver and beginner of this work. There is an order in acting, as in subsisting; the Father begins, the Son manages, and the holy Spirit works and perfects all. God, viz. *the Father*, is a Saviour by Christ, through the Spirit. John iii. 16. *God so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life*. He is the *Father of Christ*, and through him the *Father of mercies*; all spiritual blessings are by Christ from him. Eph. i. 3. *All the joy in God through Jesus Christ*. Rom. v. 11. *And with one mind, and with one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*.

(2.) The spring and rise of it. The divine *philanthropy*, or *kindness and love of God to man*. By grace we are saved from first to last; this is the ground and motive; God's pity and mercy to man in misery was the first wheel, or rather the spirit in the wheels, that sets and keeps them all in motion. God is not, cannot be moved by any thing out of himself; the occasion is in man, viz. his misery and wretchedness: But sin, bringing that misery, wrath might have issued out, rather than compassion; but God knowing how to adjust all with his own honour and perfections, would pity and save rather than destroy: He delights in mercy; *where sin abounded, grace did much more abound*. We read of *riches of goodness and mercy*, Rom. ii. 4. Eph. ii. 7. Acknowledge we this, and give him the glory of it, not turning it to wantonness, but to thankfulness and obedience.

(3.) Here is the means, or instrumental cause, viz. The shining out of this love and grace of God in the gospel, *after it appeared*, viz. in the word. Love and grace appearing hath, through the Spirit, great virtue to soften and change, and turn to God, and so is *the power of God to salvation, to every one that believeth*. Thus having asserted God to be the author, his free grace the spring, and the manifestation of this in the gospel the means of salvation; that the honour of all still may be the better secured to him,

(4.) False grounds and motives are here removed: *Not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us*; not for foreseen works of ours, but his own free grace and mercy alone. Works must be in the saved (where is room for it) but not among the causes of his salvation; they are the way to the kingdom, not the meriting price of it; all is upon the foot of undeserved favour and mercy, from first to last. Election is of grace, we are chosen to be holy, not because antecedently seen we would be so, Eph. i. 4. It is the fruit, not the cause of election. 2 Thes. ii. 13. *God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth*. So effectual calling, in which election breaks out and is first seen. 2 Tim. i. 9. *He hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began*. We are justified freely by grace, Rom. iii. 24. and sanctified and saved by grace, Eph. ii. 8. *By grace ye are saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God*. Faith and all saving graces are God's free gift and works; the beginning, and increase, and perfection of them in glory, all is from this. In building men up to be an holy temple unto God, from the foundation to the top stone, we must cry nothing but *grace, grace* unto it. It is *not of works, lest any man should brag*; but of *grace, that he who glorieth, should glory only in the Lord*. Thus the true cause is shewn, and the false removed.

(5.) Here is the formal cause of salvation, or that wherein it lies, the beginnings of it at least, in *regeneration*, or spiritual *renewing*, as it is here called. *Old things pass away, and all things become new*, viz. in a moral and spiritual, not in a physical and natural sense: It is the same man, but with other dispositions and habits: evil ones are done away, as to the prevalency of them at present, and all remains of them in due time will be so, viz. when the work shall be perfected in heaven. A new prevailing principle of grace and holiness is wrought, which inclines and sways, and governs, and makes the man a *new man*, a *new creature*; new thoughts, desires, and affections, a new and holy turn of life, and actions; the life of God in man, not only from God in a special manner, but conformed and tending to him. Here is salvation begun, and which will be growing and increasing to perfection; therefore it is said, *he saved us*. What is so begun,

as sure to be perfected in time, is expressed as if it already were so. Look we to this therefore without delay, we must be initially saved now, by regeneration, if on good ground we would expect complete salvation in heaven; the change then will be but in degree, not in kind; grace is glory begun, as glory is but grace in its perfection. How few mind this? Most carry it, as if they were afraid to be happy before the time; they would have heaven, they pretend at last, yet care not for holiness now, i. e. they would have the end without the beginning; so absurd are sinners: But without regeneration, that is the first resurrection, no attaining the second glorious one, the resurrection of the just. Here then is formal salvation, in the new divine life, wrought by the gospel.

(6.) Here is the outward sign and seal thereof in baptism, called therefore *the washing of regeneration*. The work itself is inward and spiritual; but this is outwardly signified and sealed in this ordinance. Water is of a cleansing and purifying nature, does away the filth of the flesh, and so was apt to signify the doing away the guilt and defilement of sin by the blood and Spirit of Christ; though that aptness alone without Christ's institution had not been sufficient: This it is that makes it of this signification on God's part, a seal of righteousness by faith, as circumcision was, in the place of which it succeeds; and on ours an engagement to be the Lord's. Thus baptism saves figuratively, and sacramentally, where it is rightly used, Acts xxii. 16. *Arise and be baptised, and wash away thy sins, calling upon the name of the Lord*. So Eph. v. 26. *That he might sanctify and cleanse us by the washing of water, by the word*. Slight not this outward sign and seal, where it may be had according to Christ's appointment; yet rest not in the outward washing only, but look to the *answer of a good conscience*, without which the external washing will avail nothing. The covenant sealed in baptism binds to duties, as well as exhibits and conveys benefits and privileges; if the former be not minded, in vain are the latter expected. Sever not what God has joined, in both the outer and inner part is baptism complete; as he that was circumcised became debtor to the whole law, Gal. v. 3. so is he that is baptized to the gospel, to observe all the commands and ordinances thereof, as Christ appointed, Matt. xxviii. 19. *Disciple all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you*. This is the outward sign and seal of salvation, baptism, called here *the washing of regeneration*.

(7.) Here is the principal efficient, viz. The Spirit of God, it is the *renewing of the holy Ghost*; not excluding the Father and the Son, who in all works without themselves are concurring; nor the use of means, viz. the word and sacraments, by which the Spirit works; through his operation it is, that they have their saving effect. In the œconomy of our salvation the applying and effecting part is specially attributed to the *holy Spirit*. We are said *to be born of the Spirit*; *to be quickened and sanctified by the Spirit*; *to be led and guided, strengthened and helped by the Spirit*. Through him we mortify sin, perform duty, walk in God's ways; all the acts and operations of the divine life in us, the works and fruits of righteousness without us, all are through this blessed and holy Spirit, who is therefore called *the Spirit of life*, and of *grace and holiness*; all grace is from him. Earnestly therefore is he to be sought, and greatly to be heeded by us, that we quench not his holy motions, nor resist and oppose him in his workings. *Res delicatula est Spiritus*, the Spirit is a tender thing; as we carry toward him, so may we expect he will to us; if we slight and resist and oppose his workings, he will slack them; if we continue to vex him, he will retire: *Grieve not therefore the holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed to the day of redemption*, Eph. iv. 20. The Spirit seals by his renewing and sanctifying, his witnessing and assuring work; he distinguishes and marks out for salvation, fits for it, it is his work: We could not turn to God by any strength of our own, any more than we can be justified by any righteousness of our own.

(8.) Here is the manner of God's communicating this Spirit in the gifts and graces of it; not with a scanty and niggardly hand, but most freely and plentifully: *Which he shed on us abundantly*. More of the Spirit in its gifts and graces is poured out under the gospel, than was under the law; whence it is eminently stiled *the ministration of the Spirit*, 2 Cor. iii. 8. A measure of the Spirit the church hath had in all ages, but more in gospel times, since the coming of Christ, than before; *the law came by Moses, but grace and truth by Jesus Christ*, i. e. a more plentiful effusion of grace, fulfilling the promises and prophecies of old, Isa. xlv. 3. *I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring*: this greatest and best of blessings, an effusion of grace, and of the sanctifying gifts of the Spirit. Joel ii. 28. *I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh*; not on Jews only, but Gentiles also. This was to be in gospel times, and accordingly, Acts ii. 17, 18, 33. speaking of Christ risen and ascended, *having received of the Father the promise of the holy Ghost, he hath shed forth* (saith Peter) *this, that ye now see and hear*: and chap. x. 44, 45. *The holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word*, viz. Gentiles, as well as Jews. Miraculous gifts of the holy Ghost indeed those were in great measure, but not without the sanctifying graces

graces of it also accompanying many, if not all of them. There was then great abundance of common gifts of illumination, outward calling and profession, and general faith, and of more special gifts of sanctification too, such as faith, and hope, and love, and other graces of the Spirit. Get we a share in these. What will it signify if much be shed forth, and we remain dry? Our condemnation will but be aggravated the more, if under such a dispensation of grace, we remain void of grace: *Be filled with the Spirit*, saith the apostle; it is duty as well as privilege, because of the means which God in the gospel is ready to bless and make effectual; this is the manner of God's communicating grace, and all spiritual blessings under the gospel, *plentifully*; he is not straitened towards us, but we towards him, and in ourselves.

(9.) Here is the procuring cause of all, *viz.* Christ: *Through Jesus Christ our Saviour*. He it is who purchased the Spirit, and his saving gifts and graces; all come through him, and through him as a Saviour, whose undertaking and work it is to bring to grace and glory; he is our righteousness and peace, and our head, from whom we have all spiritual life and influences: *He is made of God to us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption*. Praise we God for him above all, go we to the Father by him, improve him to all sanctifying and saving purposes. Have we grace? Thank him with the Father and Spirit for it: *Account all things but loss and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of him*, and grow and increase therein more and more.

(10.) Here are the ends why we are brought into this new spiritual condition, *viz.* justification, and heirship, and hope of eternal life: *That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs, according to the hope of eternal life*. Justification in the gospel sense is the free remission of a sinner, and accepting him as righteous through the righteousness of Christ received by faith. In it there is removing guilt that bound to punishment, and accepting and dealing with the person as one that now is righteous in God's sight. This God does freely as to us, yet through the intervention of Christ's sacrifice and righteousness, laid hold on by faith. *Rom. iii. 20, &c. By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified*; but through the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe: whence *ver. 24.* we are said to be justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins; that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. God in justifying a sinner in the way of the gospel, is gracious to him, and yet just to himself and his law; forgiveness being through a perfect righteousness and satisfaction made to justice by Christ, who is the propitiation for sin, and not merited by the sinner himself. So it is here, *Not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us: that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs, according to the hope of eternal life*. It is by grace, as the spring and rise, (as was said) though through the redemption that is in Christ, as making the way, God's law and justice being thereby satisfied; and by faith applying that redemption. *Acts xiii. 39. By him, (i. e. by Christ) all that believe are justified, from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses*. Whence the apostle desires to be found in him, not having his own righteousness, which was of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith. Trust we not therefore in our own righteousness, or merit of good works, but to Christ's righteousness alone, received by faith for justification and acceptance with God. Inherent righteousness we must have, and the fruits of it in works of obedience; but not as our justifying righteousness before God, but as fruits of our justification, and evidences of our interest in Christ, and qualification for life and happiness, and the very beginning and part of it; but the procuring of all this is by Christ, that *being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs*. Observe, Our justification is by the grace of God, and our justification by that grace is necessary, in order to our being made heirs of eternal life; without such justification no adoption and son-ship, and so no right of inheritance. *John i. 12. Whoever received him (viz. Christ) to them gave he power to become the Sons of God, even to them that believe on his name*. Eternal life is set before us in the promise, the Spirit works faith in us, and hope of that life, and so are we made heirs of it, and have a kind of possession of it even now; faith and hope bring it near, and fill with joy in the well grounded expectation of it. The meanest believer is a great heir, though he have not his portion in hand, he has good hope through grace, and may bear up under all difficulties; there is a better state in view, he is waiting for an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for him. How well may such comfort themselves with these words. And now all this gives good reason why we should shew all meekness to all men, because we have experienced so much benefit by the kindness and love of God to us, and may hope that they, in God's time, may be partakers of the like grace, as we are. And thus of the reasons of equal and gentle, meek and tender carriage towards others; from their own bad condition in time past, and the present more happy state into which they are brought, without any merit or deservings of their own, and whereinto by the same grace others may be brought also.

No. cxiii.

[3.] The apostle having opened the duties of Christians in common, with the reasons respecting themselves, adds another from their goodness and usefulness to men.

8. *This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God, might be careful to maintain good works: these things are good and profitable unto men.*

1. Observe, When he hath opened the grace of God toward us, he immediately presseth the necessity of good works; for we must not expect the benefit of God's mercy, unless we make conscience of our duty. *This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly*; i. e. this is a true Christian doctrine of highest importance, and which ministers must most earnestly and constantly press and inculcate; *that they which have believed in God* do not think that a bare naked faith will save them; but it must be an operative, working faith, bringing forth the fruit of righteousness; they must make it their care to maintain good works, not to do them occasionally only, and when opportunities come in their way, but to seek opportunities for doing them. *These things are good and profitable unto men*: these good works, say some, or the teaching of these things, rather than idle questions, as follows. These things are good in themselves, and the teaching of them useful to mankind, making persons a common good in their places. 2. Observe, Ministers in teaching must see that they deliver what is sound and good in itself, and profitable to them that hear: all must be to the use of edifying both of persons and societies.

5. Here is the fifth and last thing in the matter of the epistle: what Titus should avoid in teaching; how he should deal with an heretick; with some other directions.

9. But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain.

(1.) That the apostle's meaning here might be more clear and full, and specially fitted to the time, and state of things there, and the many Judaizers among them, he tells Titus what in teaching he should shun. There are needful questions to be discussed and cleared, such as make for improvement in useful knowledge; but idle and foolish enquiries, tending neither to God's glory, or the edification of men, these must be shunned. Some may have a shew of wisdom, but are vain, as many among the Jewish doctors, as well as of later school-men, who abound with questions of no moment or use to faith or practice; avoid these. And genealogies, of the gods, say some, that the heathen poets made such noise about; or rather those that the Jews were so curious in; some lawful and useful enquiries might be made into these things, to see the fulfilling of the scriptures in some cases, and specially in the descent of Christ the Messiah; but all that served to pomp only and feed vanity, in boasting of a long pedigree, and much more such as the Jewish teachers were ready to busy themselves in, and trouble their hearers with, even since Christ was come, and that distinction of families and tribes have been taken away, as if they would build again that polity that now is abolished; these Titus must withstand as foolish and vain. And contentions and strivings about the law. There were those that were for the Mosaic rites and ceremonies, and would have them continued in the church; though by the gospel and coming of Christ they were superseded and done away. Titus must give no countenance to these, but avoid and oppose them. For they are unprofitable and vain: This is to be referred to all those foolish questions and genealogies, as well as those strivings about the law. They are so far from instructing and building up in godliness, that they are hinderances of it rather: Christian religion and good works, which are to be maintained, will hereby be weakened and prejudiced; the peace of the church disturbed, and progress of the gospel staid. Observe, Ministers must not only teach things good and useful, but shun and oppose the contrary, what would corrupt the faith, and hinder godliness and good works; nor should people have itching ears, but love and embrace sound doctrine, which tends most to the use of edifying.

(2.) But because after all there will be heresies and hereticks in the church, the apostle next directs Titus what to do in such a case, and how to deal with such.

10. A man that is an heretick, after the first and second admonition, reject: 11. Knowing that he that is such, is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.

He that forakes the truth, as it is in Christ Jesus, and broaches false doctrines, and propagates them to the corrupting of the faith in weighty and momentous points, and breaks the peace of the church about them, let such an one be rejected, after due means used to reclaim him. Admonish him once, and again, that

that if possible he may be brought back, and thou mayest gain thy brother; but if that will not reduce him, that others be not hurt, cast him out of the communion, and warn all Christians to avoid him. *Knowing that he that is such, is subverted, i. e. turned off from the foundation, and sinneth grievously, being self-condemned.* Those that will not be reclaimed by admonitions, but are obstinate in their sins and errors, *are subverted and self-condemned*; they inflict that punishment upon themselves, that the governors of the church should inflict upon them: *i. e. they throw themselves out of the church, and throw off its communion, and so are self-condemned.* 1. Observe, How great an evil proper heresy is, not lightly therefore to be charged upon any, though greatly to be taken heed of by all. Such an one is *subverted* or *perverted*, a metaphor from a building so ruined, as it is hard, if possible, to repair and raise it up again. Proper hereticks have seldom been recovered to the true faith; not so much defect of judgment, as perverseness of the will being in the case, through pride, or ambition, or self-willedness, or covetousness, or such like corruption, which therefore must be taken heed of; be humble, love the truth, and practise it, and damning heresy will be escaped. 2. Observe, Pains and patience must be used about those that err most grievously. They are not easily and soon to be given up and cast off, but competent time and means must be tried for their recovery. 3. Observe, The church's means even with *hereticks* are perswasive and rational. They must be admonished, instructed, and warned, so much *καθ' ὅσον* does import. 4. Observe, Upon continued obstinacy and irreclaimableness, the church hath power, and is obliged to preserve its own purity, by severing such a corrupt member, which discipline may too, by God's blessing, become effectual to reform the offender, or leave him the more inexcusable in his condemnation.

(3.) The apostle subjoins some further directions.

12. When I shall send Artemas unto thee, or Tychicus, be diligent to come unto me to Nicopolis: for I have determined there to winter. 13. Bring Zenas the lawyer, and Apollos on their journey diligently, that nothing be wanting unto them.

Here are two personal things enjoined, *viz.*

[1.] That Titus should hold himself ready to come to Paul at Nicopolis, a city of Thrace, as is reckoned, on the borders of Macedonia. So soon as Artemas or Tychicus should be sent to Crete to supply his place, and take care of the churches there, when he should leave them. The apostle would not have them in their young and weak state be without one or other of chief sufficiency, to guide and help them. Titus, it seems, was not their ordinary fixed bishop or pastor, but an evangelist, otherwise Paul would not have called him so much from his charge. Of Artemas we read little, but Tychicus is mentioned on many occasions with respect. Paul calls him *a beloved brother*, and *faithful minister*, and *fellow servant in the Lord*: one fit therefore for the service intimated. When Paul saith to Titus, *Be diligent to come to me to Nicopolis, for I have determined there to winter*, it is plain the epistle was not written from Nicopolis, as the post-script would have it, for then he would have said, *I determined here, not there, to winter.*

[2.] The other personal charge to Titus is, that he would bring two of his friends *on their journey diligently*, and see them furnished, so that *nothing should be wanting to them*: This was to be done not as a piece of common civility only, but of Christian piety, out of respect both to them and the work they were sent about, which probably was to preach the gospel, or to be some

way serviceable to the churches. Zenas is stiled *the lawyer*, whether in reference to the Roman or the Mosaic law, as having some time been his profession, is doubtful: Apollos was an eminent and faithful minister: accompanying such, part of their way, and accommodating them for their work and journies, was a pious and needful service. And to further this, and lay in for it, what the apostle had before bid Titus teach, *ver. 8.* he repeats here.

14. And let ours also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful.

Let Christians, those that have believed in God, learn *to maintain good works*, especially such as these, supporting ministers in their work of preaching and spreading the gospel, hereby becoming *fellow-helpers to the truth*, 3d epistle *John*, *ver. 6, 7, 8.* *That they be not unfruitful.* Christianity is not a fruitless profession; the professors of it must be *filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God.* It is not enough that they be harmless, but they must be profitable, doing good, as well as eschewing evil. *Let ours* set up and maintain some honest labour and employment, to provide for themselves and their families, that they be not unprofitable burdens on the earth; so some understand it. Let them not think that Christianity gives them a writ of ease; no, it lays an obligation upon them to seek some honest work and calling, and therein *to abide with God.* This is of good report, will credit religion, and be good to mankind, they will not be unprofitable members of the body, or burdensome and chargeable to others, but enabled to be helpful to those in want. *To maintain good works for necessary uses*, not living like drones on the labours of others, but themselves fruitful to the common benefit.

III. The apostle concludes with salutations and benedictions.

15. All that are with me salute thee. Greet them that love us in the faith. Grace be with you all. Amen.

Though perhaps not personally known, some of them at least, yet all by Paul testify their *love* and good wishes to Titus, owning him thereby in his work, and heartening him to go on therein. Great comfort and encouragement it is to have the heart and prayers of other Christians with and for us. *Greet them that love us in the faith, or for the faith*, *i. e. who are our loving fellow Christians*; holiness or the image of God in any, is the great endearing thing, what gives strength to all other bonds, and is itself the best. *Grace be with you all. Amen.* This is the closing benediction, not to Titus alone, but to all the faithful with him: which shews, though the epistle bears the single name of Titus in the inscription; yet it was for the use of the churches there, and they were in the eye, and upon the heart of the apostle in the writing of it. *Grace be with you all*, *i. e. the love and favour of God*, with the fruits and effects thereof, according to need; spiritual ones, especially, and the increase and feeling of them more and more in their souls. This is the apostle's wish and prayer, shewing his affection to them, and the desire of their good, and a means of obtaining for them, and bringing down upon them the thing requested. Observe, Grace is the chief thing to be wished and begged for, with respect to ourselves or others; it is summarily all good. *Amen* shuts up the prayer, expressing desire and hope, that so it may, and so it shall be.

A N

E X P O S I T I O N

O F T H E

Epistle of St. P A U L to P H I L E M O N,

W I T H

P R A C T I C A L O B S E R V A T I O N S.

This epistle to Philemon is placed the last of those with the name of Paul to them, perhaps because the shortest, and of an argument peculiar and different from all the others; yet such as the Spirit of God, which indited it, saw would, in its kind, be very instructive and useful in the churches. The occasion of it was this: Philemon, one of note, and probably a minister in the church of Coloss, a city of Phrygia, had a servant named Onesimus, who having purloined his goods, ran away from him, and in his rambles came to Rome, where Paul was then a prisoner for the gospel, and providentially coming under his preaching there, was, by the blessing of God, converted by him; after which he ministered a while to the apostle in bonds, and might have been further useful to him, but understanding him to be another man's servant, he would not, without his consent, detain him, but sends him back with this letter commendatory, wherein he earnestly sues for his pardon and kind reception.

Before we enter on the exposition, such general things as follow may be taken notice of from the epistle, and what relates to it, viz.

1. **T**HE goodness and mercy of God to a poor wandering sinner, bringing him by his gracious providence under the means, and making them effectual to his conversion. Thus came he to be sought of him that asked not for him, and to be found of him that sought him not, Isa. lxxv. 1.

2. The great and endeared affection between a true convert, and him whom God used to be the instrument of his conversion. Paul regards this poor fugitive now as his son in the faith, and terms him his own bowels; and Onesimus readily serves Paul in prison, and would gladly have continued to do so, would duty have permitted; but being another's servant, he must return and submit himself to his master, and be at his dispose.

3. The tender and good spirit of this blessed apostle Paul. With what earnestness does he concern himself for the poor slave? Being now, through his preaching, reconciled to God, he labours for reconciliation between him and his master. How pathetic a letter does he here write in his behalf? Scarce any argument forgotten that could possibly be used in the case, and all pressed with such force, that had it been the greatest favour to himself that he was asking, he could not have used more.

4. The remarkable providence of God in preserving such a short writing as this, that might be thought of little concern to the church, being not only a letter to a particular person, as those to Timothy, and Titus, and Gaius, and the elect lady likewise were; but of a private personal matter, viz. the receiving of a poor fu-

gitive servant into the favour and family of his injured master. What in this is there that concerns the common salvation? And yet over this hath there been a special divine care, it being given, as the other scriptures were, by inspiration of God, and, in some sort, as they are, profitable for doctrine, and for reproof, and for correction, and for instruction in righteousness. God would have extant a proof and instance of his rich and free grace for the encouragement and comfort of the meanest and vilest of sinners, looking to him for mercy and forgiveness; and instruction to ministers and others not to despise any, much less to judge them as to their final state, as if they were utter cast-aways; but rather to attempt their conversion, hoping they may be saved; likewise how to carry toward them, and how they should carry. Joy must be on earth, as well as there is in heaven, over one sinner that repenteth; they must now be loved, and helped, and confirmed in good, and furthered in it; and in their outward concerns, their comfort and welfare must be consulted and promoted, what in us lies. And on their part, they must be humble and grateful, acknowledging God and his instruments, in what good they have received, ready to all suitable returns, making what reparation they can in case of injuries, and living a life of thankfulness and obedience. To such purposes may this epistle have been written and preserved. And perhaps,

5. There may be something further in all this; at least, by way of allusion, it is applicable to the mediation and intercession of Christ for poor sinners. We, like

like Onesimus, were revolters from God's service, and had injured him in his rights; Jesus Christ finds us, and by his grace works a change in us, and then intercedes for us with the Father, that we may be received into his favour and family again, and past offences may be forgiven; and we are sure the *Father heareth him always*. There is no reason to doubt but Paul prevailed with

Philemon to forgive and receive Onesimus; and more reason have we to be confident that the intercession of Christ with the Father is prevalent for the acceptance of all, whose case he takes in hand, and recommends to him. From these general observations come we to the epistle itself.

In this epistle we have the preface, ver. 1—7. The substance and body of it, ver. 8—21. And then the conclusion, ver. 22. to the end.

1. **P**AUL a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy our brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellow-labourer, 2. And to our beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellow-soldier, and to the church in thy house:

I. In these two first verses of the *preface* are the persons from and to whom it is written, with some annexed note or title implying somewhat of argument to the purpose of the letter.

1. *The persons writing*: Paul, the principal, who calls himself a *prisoner of Jesus Christ*, i. e. for Jesus Christ. A prisoner simply is no comfort or honour, but such as Paul was *for the faith and preaching of the gospel*, this was true glory, and proper to move Philemon upon the request made to him by such an one. A petition from one suffering for Christ and his gospel sure would be tenderly regarded by a believer and minister of Christ, and especially when strengthened too with the concurrence of Timothy, one eminent in the church, sometime called by Paul, *his son in the faith*, but now it is likely grown more in years, he styles him *his brother*. What could be denied to two such petitioners? Paul is not slight in serving a poor convert, he gets all the additional help he could in it.

2. *The persons written to*, are Philemon and Apphia, and with them Archippus, and the church in Philemon's house. Philemon, the master of Onesimus, was the principal to whom the letter is inscribed; the *head* of the family, in whom was the authority and power of taking in, or shutting out, and whose property Onesimus was: with him therefore chiefly lay the business. *To Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellow-labourer*; a good man he was, and probably a minister, and on both accounts dearly beloved by Paul. *A lover of good men* is one property of a good minister, Tit. i. 8. and especially must such love those that *labour with them in the work of the gospel*, and who are faithful therein. *The general calling as Christians* knits those together who are Christians; but when conjunction in the *special calling as ministers*, is added, this will be further endearing. Paul in the highest degree of ministry not only calls Timothy, an evangelist, *his brother*, but Philemon, an ordinary pastor, his *dearly beloved fellow-labourer*: An example of humility and condescension, and of all loving regards, even in those that are highest in the church, toward others that are labourers in the same special heavenly calling. With Philemon Apphia is joined, probably his yoke-fellow; and having a concern in the domestick affairs, the apostle directs to her likewise. She was a party offended and injured by Onesimus, and therefore proper to be taken notice of in a letter for reconciliation and forgiveness. Justice and prudence would direct Paul to this express notice of her, who might be helpful and furthering of the good ends of his writing. She is set before Archippus, as more concerned, and having more interest. A loving conjunction there is in domestick matters between husband and wife, whose interests are one, and affections and actions must be according. These are the principal parties written to. The less principal are Archippus, and the church in Philemon's house. Archippus was a minister in the church of Coloss, Philemon's friend, and probably co-pastor with him; Paul might think him one whom Philemon would advise with, and who might be capable of furthering the good work of peace-making and forgiveness, and therefore might judge fit to put him in the inscription of the letter, with the adjunct of *fellow-soldier*. He had called Philemon his *fellow-labourer*. Ministers must look on themselves as labourers and soldiers, who must therefore take pains, and endure hardship; they must stand on the guard, and make good their post; and must look on one another as *fellow-labourers*, and *fellow-soldiers*, who must stand together, and strengthen one another's hands and hearts in any work of their holy function and calling: they need see to it, that they be provided of spiritual weapons, and skill to use them; as *labourers*, they must minister the word, and sacraments, and discipline, and watch over souls, as *those that must give an account of them*; and as *soldiers* they must fight the Lord's battles, and not entangle themselves in the things of this life, but attend to the pleasing of him who hath chosen them to be soldiers, 2 Tim. ii. 4. To these it is added, *And to the church in thy house*; i. e. his whole family, in which the worship of God was kept up, so that he had, as it were, a *church* in his house. Observe, Families which generally may be most pious and orderly, yet may have one or other in

them impious and wicked. This was the aggravation of Onesimus's sin, that it was where he might, and should have learned better; it is like he was secret in his miscarriage, till his flight discovered him. Hearts are unknown but to God, till overt-acts discover them; yet this one evil servant did not hinder Philemon's house to be called and counted a *church*, for the religious worship and order that was kept up in it: and such should all families be, nurseries of religion, societies where God is called on, his word read, and sabbaths observed, and the members instructed in the knowledge of him, and of their duty to him: Neglect of which is followed with ignorance and all corruption. Wicked families are nurseries for hell, as good ones are for heaven. Masters and others of the family may not think it enough to be good, singly and severally in their personal capacities, but they must be socially so; as here Philemon's house was a *church*: and Paul, for some concern that all might have in this matter of Onesimus, directs to them all; that their affection, as well as Philemon's, might return to him; and that in their way and place they might further, and not hinder, the reconciliation wished and sought. Desirable it is that all in a family be well affected toward one another, for furthering their particular and the common good and benefit of all. On such accounts might it be that Paul inscribes his letter here so generally, that all might be the more ready to own and receive this poor convert, and to carry lovingly toward him. Next to this inscription is,

3. *The apostle's salutation of those named by him.*

3. Grace to you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is the token in every epistle; so the apostle writes: He is an hearty well-wisher to all his friends, and wishes for them the best things; not gold or silver, or any earthly good in the first or chiefest place, but *grace, and peace from God and Christ*; he cannot give them himself, but he prays for them from him who can bestow them. *Grace*, i. e. the free favour and good will of God, the spring and fountain of all blessings. *And peace*, i. e. all good, as the fruit and effect of that grace. *To you*, i. e. be bestowed on you, and continued to you, with the comfortable feeling and sense of it in yourselves. *From God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ*. The holy Spirit also is understood, though not named; for all acts towards the creatures are of the whole Trinity: From the *Father*, who is our Father in Christ, the first in order of acting as of subsisting; and from Christ, his favour and good will as God, and the fruits of it through him as Mediator God-man; it is in the *beloved* that we are accepted, and through him we have peace and all good things; who is, with the Father and Spirit, to be looked to, and blessed, and praised for all, and to be owned, not only as Jesus and Christ, but as Lord also. In 2 Cor. xiii. 14. the apostle's benediction is full: *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all, Amen*. Observe, Spiritual blessings are first and especially to be sought for ourselves and others. The favour of God and peace with him, as in itself it is the best and most desirable good, so is it the cause of all other; and what puts sweetness into every mercy, and can make happy even in the want of all earthly things. *Though there be no herd in the stall, and the labour of the olive fail, &c.* yet may such rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of their salvation, Hab. iii. 17, 18. *There be many that say, who will shew us any good?* But if God lift up the light of his countenance, that will put more joy and gladness into the heart, than all worldly increase, Psal. iv. 6, 7. And Num. vi. 6. *The Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace*. In this is summarily all good, and from this one fountain, God the Father, Son, and Spirit, all comes. After this salutation of the apostle to Philemon, and his friends, and family, for better making way still for his suit to him,

4. *He expresses the singular affection he had for him*, by thanksgiving and prayer to God in his behalf, and the great joy for the many good things he knew and heard to be in him, in the four next following verses.

4. I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers, 5. Hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints; 6. That the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus.

Jesus. 7. For we have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother.

The apostle's thanksgiving and prayer here for Philemon are set forth by the object, and circumstance, and matter of them, with the way whereby much of the knowledge of Philemon's goodness came to him.

(1.) *Here is the object* of Paul's praises and prayers for Philemon: *I thank my God, making mention of thee in my prayers.* 1. Observe, God is the author of all the good in any, or that is done by them. *Hosea xiv. 8. From me is thy fruit found,* 2. Observe, To him therefore is all the praise due, *1 Chron. xxix. 13, 14. But [or for] who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee,* both wherewith to offer, and the will and heart to do it: On which account (says he) *we thank thee our God, and praise thy glorious name.* 3. Observe, It is the privilege of good men, that in their praises and prayers they come to God as *their* God: *Our God, we thank thee,* said David; and *I thank my God,* said Paul. 4. Observe, Our prayers and praises should be offered up to God, not for ourselves only, but for others also. Private addresses should not be altogether with a private spirit, minding our own things only, but others must be remembered by us; we must be affected with joy and thankfulness for any good in them, or done by them, or bestowed on them, as far as is known to us; and seek for them what they need. In this lies no little part of the communion of saints. St. Paul in his private thanksgivings and prayers, was often particular in remembering his friends: *I thank my God, making mention of thee in my prayers;* sometimes it may be by name, or however having them particularly in the thoughts, and God knows who is meant, though not named: This is a means of exercising love, and obtaining good for others. *Strive with me by your prayers to God for me,* said the apostle; and what he desired for himself, to be sure he practised in others behalf: And so should all do. *Pray one for another,* says St. James, *chap. v. 16.*

(2.) *Here is the circumstance: Always making mention of thee.* Always, i. e. usually, not once or twice only, but frequently. So must we remember Christian friends much, and often, as their case may need, bearing them in our thoughts, and upon our hearts before our God.

(3.) *Here is the matter* both of his praises and prayers, in reference to Philemon.

(1.) Of his praises,
(1.) He thanks God for the *love* which he heard Philemon had towards the Lord Jesus. He is to be loved as God superlatively, as his divine perfections require; and as related to us, *the Lord,* and *our Lord,* our Maker, Redeemer, and Saviour, who loved us and gave himself for us. Paul thanks God for what he heard of this, the signal marks and expressions of it in Philemon. And,

(2.) For his *faith* in Christ also. Love to Christ, and faith in him, are prime Christian graces, for which there is great ground of praise to God, where he hath blessed any with them. *Rom. i. 8. I thank my God, because your faith is published throughout the world:* And in reference to the Colossians, *chap. i. 3, 4. We give thanks to God since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus.* This is a saving grace, and the very principle of Christian life, and of all good works.

(3.) He praiseth God likewise for his *love to all the saints:* These two must go together, for he who *loveth him that begat, must and will love them also that are begotten of him.* The apostle joins them in that, *Col. i. 3, 4. We give thanks to God, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints:* These bear the image of Christ, which will be loved by every Christian. Different sentiments, and ways in what is not essential, will not make difference of affection, i. e. as to the truth; though difference in the degrees of love will be, according as more or less of that image is discerned. Mere external differences are nothing here: Paul calls a poor converted slave *his bowels.* We must love, as God does, *all saints.* Paul thanked God not only for the good that was in the churches, but in the particular persons he wrote to: And though he had his account by report: *Hearing of the love and faith which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints:* This was what he enquired after concerning his friends, the truth, and growth, and fruitfulness of their graces, their faith in Christ, and love to him, and to all the saints. Love to saints, if it be sincere, will be catholic and universal, love toward all saints; but faith and love as in the heart are hidden things, they are known by the effects of them. Therefore,

(2.) The apostle joins prayer with his praises, that the fruits of Philemon's *faith and love* might be more and more conspicuous, so as that the communication of them might constrain others to the acknowledgment of all the good things that were in him, and in his house, toward Christ Jesus, i. e. that their *light might so shine before men, that they seeing their good works, might be stirred up to imitate them, and to glorify their Father which is in heaven.* Good works must be done not of vain glory, *to be seen,* yet such as *may be seen,* to God's glory and the good of men.

(4.) *He adds a reason* both of that his prayer and praises, *ver. 7. For we have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother.* The good thou hast done and still dost, is abundant matter of joy and comfort to me and others, who therefore desire you may continue and abound in such good fruits more and more, to God's honour and the credit of religion, *2 Cor. ix. 12. The ministration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God.*

Thus far is the preface to this epistle. Now,

II. He comes to that which is the main *business* of it, viz. to plead with Philemon in behalf of Onesimus, to receive him, and be reconciled to him. Many arguments he urges to this purpose from *ver. 8. to 21* inclusive.

8. Wherefore, though I might be much bold in Christ, to enjoin thee that which is convenient, 9. Yet for love sake I rather beseech thee, being such an one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ.

Here is the

1. *Argument,* from what was before noted, and is carried in the illative, *wherefore,* i. e. seeing so much good is reported of thee and found in thee, especially *thy love to all saints,* now let me see it on a fresh and further occasion, *refresh the bowels of Onesimus and mine also,* in forgiving and receiving him who is now a convert, and so a saint indeed, and meet for thy favour and love. Observe, A disposition to do good, and past instances and expressions of it, is a good handle to take hold on for pressing unto more: *Be not weary of well doing,* go on as thou art able, and as new objects and occasions occur, to do the same still.

2. *Argument* is from the authority of him that is now making this request to him. *I might be much bold in Christ, to enjoin thee that which is convenient.* The apostles had, under Christ, great power in the church over the ordinary ministers, as well as the members of it, for edification; they might require of them *what was fit,* and were therein to be obeyed, which Philemon should consider; this was a matter within the compass of the apostle's power to require, though he would not in this instance act up to it. Observe, Ministers, whatever their power be in the church, are to use prudence in the exercise of it; they may not unseasonably, or further than is requisite, put it forth, in all they must use godly wisdom and discretion. Wherefore this may be a

3. *Argument,* Waving the authority which yet he had to require, he chuses to intreat it of him, *ver. 9. Yet for love's sake I rather beseech thee.* Observe, It is no disparagement for those that have power, yet to be condescending, and sometimes even to beseech, where, in strictness of right, they might command; so does Paul here, though an apostle: He intreats, where he might enjoin, he argues from love rather than authority, which doubtless must carry ingaging influence with it. And especially, which may be a

4. *Argument,* When any circumstance of the person pleading gives additional force to his petition, as here: *Being such an one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ.* Years bespeak respect, and the motions of such in things lawful and fit, should be received with regard. The request of an *aged apostle,* and now suffering for Christ and his gospel, would be tenderly considered. If thou wilt do any thing for a poor aged prisoner, to comfort me in my bonds, and make my chain lighter, grant me this which I desire: Hereby in a sort you will do honour to Christ, in the person of an aged suffering servant of his, which doubtless he will take as done to himself. He makes also a

5. *Argument,* from the spiritual relation now between Onesimus and himself.

10. I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds:

Though of right and *in civil respect* he be thy servant, yet *in a spiritual sense* he is now a *son to me,* God having made me the instrument of his conversion, even here, where I am a prisoner for Christ's sake. So does God sometimes honour and comfort his suffering servants, not only working good in themselves by their sufferings, exercising and improving thereby their own graces, but making them a means of much spiritual good to others, either to their conversion, as of Onesimus here; or of their confirmation and strengthening, as *Phil. i. 14. Many brethren, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word of the Lord without fear.* When God's servants are bound, yet his word and Spirit are not bound; spiritual Children may then be born to them. The apostle lays an emphasis here: *My Son, whom I have begotten in my bonds;* he was dear to him, and he hoped would be so to Philemon, under that consideration. Prison mercies are sweet and much set by. Paul makes an argument to

Philemon from this dear relation that now was between Onesimus and him, his *Son begotten in his bonds*. And a

6. *Argument*, is from Philemon's own interest.

11. Which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me:

1. Observe, Unsanctified persons are unprofitable persons, they answer not the great end of their being and relations. Grace makes good for somewhat: *In time past unprofitable, but now profitable*, i. e. inclined and fitted to be so, and will be so to thee, his master, if thou receive him, as he hath since his conversion been here to me, ministering to me in my confinement. There seems an allusion to the name Onesimus, which signifies *profitable*: Now he will answer this name. It may be noted also, how the apostle speaks in this matter, not as Onesimus's former case and carriage might warrant; he had wronged his master, and ran away from him, and lived, as if he were his own and not his; yet as God covers the sins of penitents, forgives and does not upbraid, so should men. How softly does Paul here speak? Not that Onesimus's sin was small, or that he would have any, much less himself, to take it so; but having been humbled for it, and doubtless taken shame to himself on account thereof, the apostle now would not sink his spirit by continuing to load and burden him therewith, but speaks thus tenderly, when he was pleading with Philemon, not to make severe reflexions on his servant's miscarriage, but to forgive. 2. Observe, What happy changes conversion makes; of evil, good; of unprofitable, useful: Religious servants are a treasure in a family. *Now profitable to thee and to me*. Such will make conscience of their time and trusts, promoting the interests of those whom they serve, and managing all they can for the best. This then is the argument here urged, it will now be for thy advantage to receive him: Thus changed, as he is, thou mayst expect him a dutiful and faithful servant, though in time past he was not so. Whereupon,

7. *Argument*, He urges Philemon from the strong affection that he had to Onesimus. He had mentioned the spiritual relation before, *my son begotten in my bonds*, and now he signifies how dear he was to him.

12. Whom I have sent again: thou therefore receive him that is mine own bowels.

I love him as I do myself, and have sent him back to thee for this end, that thou shouldst receive him; do it therefore for my sake, receive him as one thus dear to me. Observe, Even good men may sometimes need great earnestness and intreaty to lay their passions, and let go their resentments, and forgive those who have injured and offended them. Some have thought it to look this way, when Paul is so pathetical and earnest, mustering up so many pleas and arguments to gain what he requests. Philemon, a Phrygian might, perhaps be naturally of a rough and difficult temper, and thence need no little pains in touching all the springs that might move him to forgiveness and reconciliation; but rather should we strive to be like God, who is *slow to anger and ready to forgive, and abundant in pardons*. And again, an

8. *Argument*, is from the apostle's denying himself in sending back Onesimus; though he might have presumed upon Philemon's leave to detain him longer, yet he would not.

13. Whom I would have retained with me, that in thy stead he might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the gospel. 14. But without thy mind would I do nothing; that thy benefit should not be as it were of necessity, but willingly.

Paul was now in prison, and wanted a friend or servant to act for him, and assist him, for which he found Onesimus fit and ready, and therefore would have detained him to minister to him instead of Philemon himself, whom if he had requested to have come to him in person for such purpose, he might have presumed he would not have refused; much less might he have reckoned that he would be unwilling his servant should do this in his stead; but yet he would not take this liberty, though his circumstances needed it. *I have sent him back to thee*, that any good office of thine to me might not be of necessity, but willingly. Observe, Good deeds are most acceptable to God and man, when done with most freedom. And Paul herein, notwithstanding his apostolical power, would shew what regard he had to civil rights, which Christianity does by no means supersede or weaken, but rather confirm and strengthen. Onesimus he knew was Philemon's servant, and therefore without his consent not to be detained from him; in his unconverted state he had violated that right, and withdrawn himself to his master's wrong, but now he had seen his sin and repented, he was willing and desirous to return to his duty, and Paul would not hinder, but further this rather. He might indeed have presumed of Philemon's willingness, but notwith-

standing his need, he would deny himself rather than take that way. And he urges farther,

9. *Argument*, That such a change was now wrought in Onesimus, that Philemon need not fear his ever running from him, or injuring him any more. There are those of whom Solomon saith, *If thou deliver them, thou must do it again*, Prov. xix. 19. but the change wrought in Onesimus was such, that he would never again need one thus to intercede for him.

15. For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldst receive him ever;

Charity would so hope and judge, yea, so it would be; yet the apostle speaks cautiously, that none might be bold to make another such experiment, in expectance of a like gracious issue.

1. Observe, In matters that may be wrested to ill, ministers must speak warily, that kind providences of God toward sinners be not abused to encouragements to sin, or abatements of just abhorrence of it: *Perhaps he therefore departed from thee for a season*, &c.

2. Observe, How softly still the sins of penitents are spoken of, he calls it a *departure for a season*, instead of giving it the term that it deserved; as over-ruled and ordered by God it was a *departure*; but in itself, and in respect of the disposition and manner of the act, it was a *criminal going away*. When we speak of the nature of any sin or offence, as against God, the evil of it is not to be lessened; but in the person of a penitent sinner, as God covers it, so must we: *He departed for a season, that thou shouldst receive him for ever*; i. e. that upon conversion he may return, and be a faithful and useful servant to thee as long as he lives. *Bray a fool in a mortar, yet will not his folly depart from him*: But it is not so with true penitents, they will not *return to folly*.

3. Observe, The wisdom, and goodness, and power of God, in issuing that so happily that was begun and carried on for some time so wickedly, thus regarding a poor vassal, one of such low rank and condition, and so little regarded by men, working so good and great a change in him, that was so far gone in evil ways, that had wronged a master so good, had run from a family so pious, from the means of grace, *the church in his house*, that he should be led into the way of salvation that had fled from it, and find means made effectual at Rome, who had been hardened under them at Coloss. What riches are here of divine grace! None so low, or mean, or vile, as utterly to be despaired of. God can meet with them when running from him, can make means effectual at one time and place, which have not been so at another. So was it in this instance of Onesimus, being returned to God, he now returns to his master, who will have more service, and better hold of him than ever, *viz.* by conscience of his duty and faithfulness in it to his life's end; his interest therefore it will be now to receive him. So God often brings gain to his out of their losses. And beside interest, a

10. *Argument*, Is taken from the capacity under which Onesimus now would return, and must be received by Philemon.

16. Not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord?

Not now as a servant; i. e. not merely or so much, but above a servant, *viz.* in a spiritual respect, *a brother beloved*, one to be owned as a brother in Christ, and to be loved as such, upon this holy change that is wrought in him, and one, therefore, that will be useful unto thee upon better principles, and in a better manner than before; that will love and promote the best things in thy family, and be a blessing in it, and help to keep up *the church that is in thy house*. 1. Observe, There is a spiritual brotherhood between all true believers, however differenced in civil and outward respects, they are all children of the same heavenly Father, have right to the same spiritual privileges and benefits, must love and do all good offices to and for one another as brethren, though still in the same rank, and degree, and station, wherein they were called. Christianity doth not null or confound respective civil duties, but strengthen the obligation to them, and direct to a right discharge of them. 2. Observe, Religious servants are more than mere ordinary servants, they have grace in their hearts, and have found grace in God's sight, and so will in the sight of religious masters, *Psal. ci. 6. Mine eyes are upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me: He that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me*. Onesimus being now become such, receive and affect him as one that is partaker of the same common faith, and so *a brother beloved, specially to me*, who have been the instrument of his conversion. Good ministers love not so much according to the outward good which they receive, as the spiritual good which they do. Paul called Onesimus *his own bowels*, and other converts *his joy and crown*. *A brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more to thee, both in the flesh and in the Lord?* by a double tie therefore, *viz.* both civil and religious; thy servant, thy property, one of thy house and family, and in a spiritual respect now thy *brother in Christ*; which heightens the engagement, he is God's servant and thine too; here

here are more ties than he is under unto me. How readily therefore should he be received and loved by thee, as one of thy family, and one of the true faith, one of thy house, and one of the church in thy house? And this argument is strengthened with another, viz.

11. *Argument*, From the communion of saints.

17. If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as my self.

There is a *fellowship* among saints, they have interest one in another, and must love and act accordingly. Now, shew thy love to me, and the interest I have in thee, by loving and receiving one so near and dear to me, even as myself; own and treat him as thou wouldst me, with a like ready and true, though perhaps not equal affection.

But, *Quest.* Why such concern and earnestness for a servant, a slave, and such an one as had miscarried? *Answ.* Onesimus being now penitent, it was doubtless to encourage him, and to support him against the fears he might have in returning to a master, whom he had so much abused and wronged, to keep him from sinking despondency and dejection, and hearten him to his duty. Wife and good ministers will have great and tender care of young converts, to encourage and hearten them what they can to and in their duty. *Object.* But Onesimus had wronged as well as offended his master. The answer to this makes a

12. *Argument*, A promise of satisfaction to Philemon.

18. If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account. 19. I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it: albeit I do not say to thee how thou owest unto me even thine own self besides.

Here are three things, viz.

(1.) A confession of Onesimus's debt to Philemon: *If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought.* It is not an *if* of doubting, but of illation and concession, *seeing he hath wronged thee*, and thereby is become indebted to thee; such an *if* as *Coloss.* iii. 1. and *2 Pet.* ii. 4. &c. Observe, True penitents will be ingenuous in owning their faults, as doubtless Onesimus had been to Paul, upon his awakening and being brought to repentance; and especially is this to be done in cases of injury to others. Onesimus by Paul owns the wrong. And,

(2.) Paul here engages for satisfaction: *Put that on my account, I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it.* Whence, 1. Observe, The communion of saints does not destroy distinction of property: Onesimus now converted and become a brother beloved, yet is Philemon's servant still, and indebted to him for wrongs that he had done, and not to be discharged but by free and voluntary remission, or on reparation made by himself or some other in his behalf; which part, rather than fail, the apostle undertakes for him. Upon which, 2. Observe, Suretyship is not in all cases unlawful, but in some is a good and merciful undertaking. Only know the person and case, be not *surety for a stranger*, *Prov.* xi. 15. and go not beyond ability, help thy friend thou mayst, as far as will stand with justice and prudence. And how happy for us that Christ would be made the surety of a better covenant, *Heb.* vii. 22. that he would be made *sin for us*, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him? And, 3. Observe, Formal securities by writing, as well as by word and promise, may be required and given. Persons die, and words may be forgotten or mistaken; writing better preserves right and peace, and hath been in use with good persons, as well as others, in all ages, *Jer.* xxxii. 9. &c. *Luke* xvi. 5, 6, 7. It was much that Paul, who lived on contributions himself, would undertake to make good all loss by an evil servant, to his master; but hereby he expresses his real and great affection for Onesimus, and his full belief of the sincerity of his conversion: And he might have hope, notwithstanding this generous offer, Philemon would not insist on it, but freely remit all; considering

(3.) The reason of things between him and Philemon: *Albeit I do not say to thee, how thou owest unto me even thine ownself besides*; i. e. thou wilt remember, without my minding thee, thou art on other accounts more in debt to me than this comes to. Modesty in self-praises, is true praise. The apostle glances at it, how beneficial he had been to Philemon: That thou art any thing in grace and acceptation with God, or enjoyest any thing in a right and comfortable manner, it is under God owing to my ministry; I have been the instrument in his hand of all that spiritual good to thee, and what thy obligation to me on this account is, I leave to thee to consider. Thy forgiving a pecuniary debt to a poor penitent for my sake, and on my request, and which, however, I now take upon myself to answer, thy remitting it to him, or to me, now his surety, thou wilt confess is not so great a thing; here is more *per contra*, thou owest to me even thine ownself besides. Observe, How great the endearments are between ministers, and those toward whom their endeavours have been blessed to their conversion or spiritual edification: *If it had been possible* (said Paul to the Galatians) *ye would have plucked*

out your own eyes, and have given them to me, *Gal.* iv. 15. On the other hand he calls them his children, of whom he travelled again, till Christ was formed in them, i. e. the likeness of Christ more fully. So *1 Thess.* ii. 8. *We were willing to have imparted to you not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.* By way of allusion this may illustrate Christ's undertaking for us; we were revolted from God, and by sin had wronged him, but Christ undertakes to make satisfaction, *the just for the unjust, that he might bring us unto God.* If the sinner owes thee ought, put it upon my account, I will pay the debt; let his iniquity be laid on me, I will bear the penalty. Further, a

13. *Argument*, Is from the joy and comfort the apostle hereby would have on Philemon's own account, as well as on Onesimus's, in such a seasonable and acceptable fruit of Philemon's faith and obedience.

20. Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in the Lord: refresh my bowels in the Lord.

Philemon was Paul's son in the faith, yet he intreats him as a brother; Onesimus a poor slave, yet he solicits for him as if he were seeking some great thing for himself. How pathological is he? Yea, brother, or O my brother, it is an adverb of wishing or desiring, *let me have joy of thee in the Lord.* Thou knowest that I am now a prisoner of the Lord, i. e. for his sake and cause, and need all the comfort and support that my friends in Christ can give me: Now this will be a joy to me, *I shall have joy of thee in the Lord*, as seeing such an evidence and fruit of thy own Christian faith and love, and on Onesimus's account, who hereby will be relieved and encouraged. 1. Observe, Christians should do the things that may joy the hearts of one another, both people and ministers reciprocally; and ministers of their brethren: From the world they expect trouble, and where may they look for comfort and joy, but in one another? 2. Observe, Fruits of faith and obedience in people are the minister's greatest joy, especially the more of love appears in them to Christ and his members, forgiving injuries, shewing compassion, being merciful, as their heavenly Father is merciful. *Refresh my bowels in the Lord.* It is not any carnal, selfish respect I am acted by, but what is pleasing to Christ, and that he may have honour therein. 1. Observe, The Lord's honour and service is a Christian's chief aim in all things. And 2. Observe, It is meat and drink to a good minister to see people ready and zealous in what is good, especially in acts of charity and beneficence, as occasions occur, forgiving injuries, and remitting somewhat of their right, and the like. And once more, his last, which is the

14. *Argument*, Lies in his good hope and opinion which he expresseth of Philemon.

21. Having confidence in thy obedience I wrote unto thee, knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say.

Good thoughts and expectations of us more strongly move and engage to do the things expected from us. The apostle knew Philemon to be a good man, and was thence persuaded of his readiness to do good, and that not in a scanty and niggardly manner, but with a free and liberal hand. Observe, Good persons will be ready for good works, and not narrow and pinching, but abundant in them. *Isa.* xxxii. 8. *The liberal deviseth liberal things.* The Macedonians first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to his apostles by the will of God, to do what good they could with what they had, according as occasions offered.

Thus far is the substance and body of the epistle. Now he comes,

III. To the conclusion. Where,

1. He signifies his good hope of deliverance, through their prayers, and that shortly he might see them, desiring Philemon to make provision for him.

22. But withal prepare me also a lodging: for I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you.

But withal, or moreover: He comes to another thing, yet, as may seem, not without some eye to the matter which he had been upon, that might be furthered by this intimation, that he hoped he should himself soon follow, and know the effect of his epistle, which Philemon would therefore be the more stirred up to see might be to his satisfaction. Now here is,

(1.) The thing requested: *Prepare me also a lodging*; under this all necessities for a stranger are included. He wills Philemon to do it, intending to be his guest, as most to his purpose. Observe, Hospitality is a great Christian duty, especially in ministers, and toward ministers, such as the apostle was, coming out of such dangers and sufferings for Christ and his gospel. Who would not shew the utmost of affectionate regards to such an one? It is an honourable title he gives Gaius, *Rom.* xvi. 23. *Mine host, and of the whole church.* Onesiphorus is also affectionately remembered

remembered by the apostle on this account, 2 Tim. i. 16. *The Lord give mercy to the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain; and in how many things he ministered to me at Ephesus thou knowest.*

(2.) Here is the ground of the apostle's request: *For I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you.* He did not know how God might deal with him, but the benefit of prayer he had often found, and hoped he should again, for deliverance and liberty to come to them. 1. Observe, Our dependence is on God for life, and liberty, and opportunity of service; all is by divine pleasure. 2. Observe, When abridged of these or any other mercies, our trust and hope must be in God, without fainting or succumbing, while our case is depending. But yet, 3. Observe, Trust must be with the use of means, prayer especially, though no other should be at hand, this hath unlocked heaven, and opened prison doors. *The fervent effectual prayer of the righteous availeth much.* 4. Observe, Prayer of people for ministers, especially when they are in distress and danger, is their great duty; ministers need and request it. Paul, though an apostle, did so with much earnestness, Rom. xv. 30. 2 Cor. i. 11. Eph. vi. 18, 19. 1 Thess. v. 25. The least may this way be helpful to the greatest. Yet, 5. Observe, Though prayer obtains, yet it does not merit the things obtained: They are God's gifts and Christ's purchase. *I trust that through your prayers, χαρισθήσεσθαι ὑμῖν, I shall be freely bestowed on you.* What God gives, yet he will be sought to for, that mercies may be valued the more, and known whence they come, and God may have the praise. Ministers lives and labours are for the people's good; the office was set up for them; *he gave gifts for men, apostles, &c.* Eph. iv. 8, 11, 12. Their gifts, and labours, and lives, all are for their benefit, 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22. *All things are yours, Apollos, Cephas, &c.* 6. Observe, In praying for faithful ministers, people, in effect, pray for themselves. *I trust I shall be given unto you; i. e. for your service, and comfort, and edification in Christ.* In 2 Cor. iv. 5. 7. Observe, The humility of the apostle; his liberty, should he have it, he would own to be through their prayers, as well as, or more than his own; he mentions them only through the high thoughts he had of the prayers of many, and the regards God would shew to his praying people. Thus of the first thing in the apostle's conclusion.

2. He sends salutations from one that was his fellow prisoner, and four more that were his fellow labourers.

23. There salute thee Epaphras, my fellow-prisoner in Christ Jesus; 24. Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my fellow-labourers.

Saluting is wishing health and peace. Christianity is no enemy to courtesy, but enjoins it, 1 Pet. iii. 8. It is a meer expression of love and respect, and means to preserve and nourish it. *There salute thee Epaphras my fellow-prisoner in Christ Jesus:* He was of Coloss, and so countryman and fellow citizen with Philemon; by office he seems to have been an evangelist, who laboured among the Colossians, if he was not the first converter of them, for whom he had special affection. *Our dear fellow servant* (said St. Paul) *and for you a faithful minister of Christ,* Col. i. 7. and chap. iv. 12. *a servant of Christ, always labouring for you in prayers.* *I bear him record that he hath a great zeal for you, &c.* A very eminent person therefore this was, who being at Rome, perhaps accompanying Paul, and labouring in the same work of preaching and propagating the gospel, was confined in the same prison, and for the same cause; both termed *prisoners in Christ Jesus*, intimating the ground of their imprisonment, not any crime or wickedness, but for the faith of Christ and their service to him. An honour it is to suffer shame for Christ's name. *My fellow-prisoner in Christ Jesus,* is mentioned as his glory, and the apostle's comfort; not that he was a prisoner, and so hindered from his work; that was matter of affliction, but that seeing God thus permitted and called him to suffer, his providence so ordered it that they suffered together, and so had the benefit and comfort of one another's prayers, and help it may be in some things; this was a mercy. So God sometimes lightens the sufferings of his servants by the communion of saints, the sweet fellowship they have one with another in their bonds: Never more enjoyment of God have they found than when suffering together for God: So Paul and Silas, when their feet were fast in the stocks, their tongues were at liberty, and their hearts tuned for the praises of God. "Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my fellow-labourers." The mention of these seems in a sort to interest them in the business of the letter. How ill would it look by denial of the request of it to slight so many worthy names, as most of these (at least) were? Marcus, cousin of Barnabas, and son of Mary, who was so hospitable to the saints at Jerusalem, Col. iv. 10. Acts xii. 12.

and whose house was the place of meeting for prayer and worship of God: Though some failing seems to have been in him, when Paul and he parted, yet in conjunction with Barnabas he went on with his work, and here Paul and he, we see, were reconciled, and differences forgotten, 2 Tim. iv. 11. He bids Mark to be brought to him, *for he is profitable to me for the ministry,* viz. of an evangelist. Aristarchus is mentioned with Marcus, Col. iv. 10. and called there by Paul his *fellow-prisoner*; and speaking there of Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, he adds, *touching whom ye received commandments, if he come unto you receive him.* An evidence that himself had received him, and was reconciled to him. Next is Demas, who hitherto, it seems, appeared not faulty, though 2 Tim. iv. 10. he is censured as having forsaken Paul from *love of this present world.* But how far his forsaking was, whether total from his work and profession, or, partial only; and whether he repented, and returned to his duty, scripture is silent; and so must we: no mark of disgrace lay on him here, but he is joined with others that were faithful, as he is also in Colos. iv. 14. Lucas is the last, that *beloved physician* and evangelist, who came to Rome companion with Paul, Colos. iv. 14. 2 Tim. iv. 11. He was Paul's associate in his greatest dangers, and fellow labourer. The ministry is not a matter of carnal ease or pleasure, but of pains; if any are idle in it, they answer not their calling. Christ bids to *pray the Lord of the harvest to send forth labourers, not loiterers, into his harvest,* Matt. ix. 38. And the people are bid to *know them that labour among them, and are over them in the Lord, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake,* 1 Thess. v. 12. *My fellow-labourers,* saith the apostle: ministers must be helpers together of the truth, they serve the same Lord, in the same holy work and function, and are expectants of the same glorious reward; therefore must be assistants to each other in furthering the interest of their great and common master. Thus of the salutations, and then,

3. Here is the apostle's closing prayer and benediction.

25. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

Here is

(1.) What is wished and prayed for: viz. *Grace*, i. e. the free favour and love of God, together with the fruits and effects of it in all good things, for soul and body, for time and eternity. Observe, Grace is the best wish for ourselves and others; with this the apostle begins and ends.

(2.) From whom: viz. *Our Lord Jesus Christ*, i. e. the Son of God, second person in the Trinity, *Lord* by natural right, *by whom and for whom all things were created*, Col. i. 16. John i. 1, 2, 3. *and who is heir of all things*, and as God-man and Mediator, who purchased us, and to whom we are given by the Father. *Jesus*, i. e. the Saviour, Matt. i. 21. We were lost and undone, he recovers us, and repairs the ruin; he saves by merit, procuring pardon and life for us; and by power, rescuing us from sin, and Satan, and hell, and renewing us to the likeness, and bringing us to the enjoyment of God: Thus *Jesus*, and *Christ* the Messiah or anointed, i. e. consecrated and fitted to be king, priest, and prophet to his church. To all those offices were there anointings under the law with oil, and to them was the Saviour spiritually anointed with the Holy Ghost, Acts x. 38. In none but he were all these together, and in such eminence: *He was anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows*, Psal. xlv. 7. This Lord Jesus Christ is *ours* by original title to us, and by gospel offers and gift, his purchase of us, and our own acceptance of him, and resignation to him, and mystical union with him: *Our Lord Jesus Christ.* Observe, All grace to us is from Christ, he purchased and he bestows it. *Of his fulness we all receive, and grace for grace*, John i. 16. *He filleth all in all*, Eph. i. 23.

(3.) To whom: *Your spirit*, μετὰ τῷ πνεύματι ὑμῶν, not Philemon's only, but of all that were named in the inscription: *With your spirit*, i. e. with you, the soul or spirit being the immediate seat of grace, whence it influences the whole man, and flows out in gracious and holy actings. All the house saluted are here joined in the closing benediction, the more to mind and quicken all to further the end of the epistle.

Amen is added, not only for strong and affectionate summing up the prayer and wish, *so let it be*; but as an expression of faith that it will be heard, *so shall it be.* And what need we more to make us happy, than to have *the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ with our spirit*? This is the usual benediction, but it may be taken here to have some special respect also to the occasion; the grace of Christ with their spirits, Philemon's especially, would sweeten and mollify them, and take off too deep and keen resentments of injuries, and dispose to forgive others, as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us.

A N
E X P O S I T I O N
O F T H E
Epistle to the H E B R E W S,
W I T H
P R A C T I C A L O B S E R V A T I O N S.

Concerning this epistle we must enquire, 1. Into the divine authority of it; for this has been questioned by some, whose distempered eyes could not bear the light of it, or whose errors have been confuted by it. Such as the Arians, who deny the Godhead and Self-existence of Christ; and the Socinians, who deny his Satisfaction: But after all the attempts of such men to disparage this epistle, the divine original of it shines forth with those strong and unclouded rays, that he that runs may read it is an eminent part of the canon of scripture: The divinity of the matter, the sublimity of the stile, the excellency of the design, the harmony of this with other parts of scripture, and its general reception in the church of God in all ages; these are the evidences of its divine authority. 2. As to the divine amanuensis, or penman of this epistle, we are not so certain; it beareth not the name of any in the front of it, as the rest of the epistles do, and there has been some dispute among the learned to whom they should ascribe it: Some have assigned it to Clemens of Rome; others to Luke, and many to Barnabas, thinking that the stile and manner of expression is very agreeable to the zealous, authoritative, affectionate temper that Barnabas appears to be of, in the account we have of him in the Acts of the Apostles; and one ancient father quotes an expression out of this epistle, as the words of Barnabas. But it is generally assigned to the apostle Paul; and some later copies and translations have put Paul's name in the title: In the primitive times it was generally ascribed to him, and the stile and scope of it very well agrees with his spirit, who was a person of a clear head and a warm heart, whose main end and endeavour was to exalt Christ. And some think that the apostle Peter refers to this epistle, and proves Paul to be the penman of it, by telling the Hebrews, to whom he wrote, of Paul's having written to them, 2 Epist. iii. 15. And we read of no other epistle that he ever wrote to them but this. And though it has been objected, that since Paul put his name to all his other epistles, he would not have omitted it here; yet others have well answered, that he being the apostle of the Gentiles, who were odious to the Jews, might think fit to conceal his name, lest their prejudices against him might hinder them from reading and weighing it as they ought to do. 3. As to the scope and design of this epistle, it is very evident, it was clearly to inform the minds, and strongly to confirm the judgment of the Hebrews in the transcendent excellency of the gospel above the law, and so to take them off from the ceremonines of the law, to which they were so wedded, of which they were so fond, that they even doted on them. And those of them that were Christians retained too much of the old leaven, and wanted to be purged from it; the design of this epistle was to persuade and press the believing Hebrews to a constant adherence to the Christian faith, and perseverance in it, notwithstanding all the sufferings they might meet with in so doing. In order to this, he speaks much of the excellency of the author of the gospel, the glorious Jesus, whose honour he advances, and whom he justly prefers before all others, shewing him to be all in all, and this in lofty strains of holy rhetoric. It must be acknowledged there are many things in this epistle hard to be understood, but the sweetness we shall find therein will make us abundant amends for all the pains we take to understand it. And indeed if we compare all the epistles of the New Testament, we shall not find any of them more replenished with divine, heavenly matter than this to the Hebrews.

C H A P. I.

In this chapter we have a twofold comparison stated. (1.) Between the evangelical and legal dispensation, and the excellency of the gospel above that of the law is asserted and proved, ver. 1, 2, 3. (2.) Between the glory of Christ, and that of the highest creatures, the angels; where the prebeminence is justly given to the Lord Jesus Christ, and clearly demonstrated to belong unto him, from ver. 4, to the end of the chapter.

No. cxiv.

1. **G**OD who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, 2. Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds. 3. Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high:

Here the apostle begins with a general declaration of the excellency of the gospel dispensation above that of the law, which he demonstrates from the different way and manner of God's communicating himself, and his mind, and will, to men in the one and in the other: both these dispensations were of God, and both of them very good, but there is a great difference in the way of their coming from God.

1. Observe the way wherein God communicated himself and his will to men under the *Old Testament*; and we have here an account, (1.) Of the persons *by whom* God spoke his mind under the *Old Testament*, and they were the prophets; that is, persons chosen of God, and qualified by him for that office of revealing the will of God to men. No man taketh this honour to himself, unless called; and whoever are called of God, are qualified by him. (2.) The persons *to whom* God spake by the prophets *to the fathers*, i. e. to all the *Old Testament* saints that were under that dispensation: God favoured and honoured them with much clearer light, than that of nature, under which the rest of the world were left. (3.) The order in which God spake to men in those times that went before the gospel, those past times. He spake to his ancient people at sundry times, and in diverse manners. (1.) *At sundry times*, or by several parts, as the word signifies, which may refer either to the *several ages* of the *Old Testament* dispensation, the patriarchal, the Mosaical, and the prophetic. Or to the several gradual openings of his mind piece-meal concerning the Redeemer. To Adam, that the Messiah should come of the seed of the woman; to Abraham, that he should spring from his loins; to Jacob, that he should be of the tribe of Judah; to David, that he should be of his house; to Micah, that he should be born at Bethlehem; to Isaiah, that he should be born of a virgin. (2.) *In diverse manners*, according to the different ways in which God thought fit to communicate his mind to his prophets; sometimes by the *illapses* of his Spirit, sometimes by *dreams*, sometimes by *visions*, sometimes by an *audible voice*, sometimes by *legible characters* under his own hand, as when he wrote the ten commandments on tables of stone, of some of these different ways God himself gave an account in *Numb. xii. 6, 7*. *If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known to him in a vision, and will speak to him in a dream. Not so with my servant Moses. With him I will speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches.*

2. Observe God's method of communicating himself, and his mind and will under the *New Testament dispensation*, these *last days* as they are called, i. e. either towards the end of the world, or the end of the *Jewish state*. The times of the gospel are the *last times*, the gospel-revelation is the *last* we are to expect from God; there was first the *natural revelation*, then the *patriarchal by dreams, visions, and voices*; then the *Mosaical* in the law given forth and written down; then the *prophetic* in explaining the law, and giving clearer discoveries of Christ; but now we must expect no new revelation, but only more of the Spirit of Christ to help us better to understand what is already revealed. Now the excellency of the gospel-revelation above the former consists in two things.

1. *It is the final, the finishing revelation*, given forth in the *last days* of divine revelation, to which nothing is to be added, but the canon of scripture to be settled and sealed. So that now the minds of men are no longer kept in suspense by the expectation of new discoveries, but they rejoice in a complete revelation of the will of God, both *preceptive* and *providential*, so far as is necessary for them to know, in order to their direction and comfort. For the gospel includes a discovery of the great events that shall befall the church of God to the end of the world.

2. It is a revelation which God has made by his Son, the most excellent messenger that was ever sent into the world, far superior to all the antient patriarchs and prophets, by whom God communicated himself to his people in former times. And here we have an excellent account of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1. *The glory of his office*, and that in three respects.

(1.) *God hath appointed him to be heir of all things*. As God he was equal to the Father, but as God-man and Mediator he was appointed by the Father to be the heir of all things; that is, the sovereign Lord of all, the absolute disposer, and director, and governor, of all persons, and of all things, *Psal. ii. 6, 7*. *All power in heaven and earth is given to him, all judgment is committed to him.*

(2.) *By him God made the worlds*, both visible and invisible, the heavens and the earth, not as an instrumental cause, but as his essential word and wisdom: By him he made the *old creation*, and by him he makes the *new creature*, and by him he rules and governs both.

(3.) *He upholds all things by the word of his power*; he keeps the world from dissolving, *by him all things consist*; the weight of the whole creation is laid upon Christ, he supports the whole and all the parts. When upon the apostasy, the world was breaking to pieces under the wrath and curse of God, the Son of God, undertaking the work of redemption, has bound it up again, and established it by his almighty power and goodness. None of the antient prophets sustained such an office as this, none was sufficient for it.

2. From hence the apostle passes to the glory of the person of Christ, who was able to execute such an office; *he was the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person*, ver. 2. This is a high and lofty description of the glorious Redeemer, this is an account of his *personal excellency*.

1. He is in person the Son of God, the only begotten Son of God, and as such he must have the same nature. This *personal distinction* always supposes one and the same nature. Every son of man, is man, were not the nature the same the generation would be monstrous.

2. The person of the Son is the glory of the Father, shining forth with a truly divine splendor. As the beams are effulgent emanations of the sun, the father and fountain of light, Jesus Christ in his person is God manifest in the flesh, he is light of light, the true Shechinah.

3. The person of the Son is the true image and character of the person of the Father; being of the same nature, he must bear the same image and likeness. In beholding the power, wisdom, and goodness, of the Lord Jesus Christ, we behold the power, wisdom, and goodness of the Father, for he hath the nature and perfections of God in him. *He that hath seen the Son hath seen the Father*; that is, he hath seen the same being. He that hath known the Son, hath known the Father, *John xiv. 7, 8, 9*. For the Son is in the Father, and the Father in the Son, the personal distinction is no other than will consist with essential union. This is the glory of the person of Christ; the fulness of the Godhead dwells, not typically, but really in him.

3. From the glory of the person of Christ, he proceeds to mention the glory of his grace, his condescension itself was truly glorious. The sufferings of Christ had this great honour in them, to be a full satisfaction for the sins of his people; *by himself he purged away our sins*, that is, by the proper innate merit of his death and bloodshed by their infinite intrinsic value; as they were the sufferings of himself, he has made atonement for sin. Himself, the glory of his person and nature, gave to his sufferings such merit, as was a sufficient reparation of honour to God, who had suffered an infinite injury and affront by the sins of men.

4. From the glory of his sufferings, we are at length led to consider the glory of his exaltation; when by himself he had purged away our sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, at his Father's right hand. As Mediator and Redeemer, he is invested with the highest honour, authority, and activity, for the good of his people; the Father now does all things by him, receives all the services of his people from him. Having assumed our nature, and suffered in it on earth, he has taken it up with him to heaven, and there it has the high honour to be next to God, and this was the reward of his humiliation.

Now it was by no less a person than this that God has in these last days spoken to men, and the dignity of the messenger gives authority and excellency to the message, and therefore the dispensations of the gospel must needs exceed, and very far exceed, the dispensation of the law.

4. Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. 5. For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son? 6. And again, when he bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him. 7. And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. 8. But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom: 9. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

The apostle having proved the preheminance of the gospel above the law, from the preheminance of the Lord Jesus Christ above the prophets, now proceeds to shew that he is not only much superior to the prophets, but to the angels themselves. In this he obviates an objection that the Jewish zealots would be ready to make, that the law was not only delivered by men, but ordained by angels, *Gal. iii. 19*. that they attended at the giving forth of the law, the hosts of heaven were drawn forth to attend the Lord Jehovah on that awful occasion. Now the angels are very glorious beings, far more glorious and excellent than men; the scripture always represents them as the most excellent of all creatures, and we know of no being but God himself, that is higher than the angels; and therefore that law that was ordained by angels ought to be held in great esteem.

To take off the force of this argument the penman of this epistle proceeds to state the comparison between Jesus Christ and the holy angels, both in nature and office, and to prove, that Christ is vastly superior to the angels themselves. *Being made so much better.*

better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. Here observe,

1. The superior nature of Christ is proved from his superior name. The scripture does not give high and glorious titles without a real foundation and reason in nature, nor would such great things have been said of our Lord Jesus Christ, if he had not been as great and excellent as those words import. When it is said, that Christ was made so much better than the angels, we are not to imagine that he was a mere creature as the angels are, the word *γενόμενος*, when joined with an adjective, is no where to be rendered *created*, and here may very well be read *being more excellent*, as the Syriac version hath it, we read *γινόμενος ὁ Θεὸς ἀληθινός*, let God be true, not made so, but acknowledged to be so.

2. The superiority of the name and nature of Christ above the angels, is declared in the holy scriptures, and to be deduced from thence. We should have known little or nothing either of Christ or of the angels without the scriptures, and we must therefore be determined by them in our conceptions of the one and the other.

Now here are several passages of scripture cited, in which those things are said of Christ that were never said of the angels.

1. It was said of Christ, *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee*, Psal. ii. 7. which refers either to his eternal generation, or to his resurrection, or to his solemn inauguration into his glorious kingdom at his ascension and session at the right hand of the Father. Now this was never said concerning the angels, and therefore by inheritance he has a more excellent nature and name than they.

2. It is said concerning Christ, but never concerning the angels, *I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son*, taken from 2 Sam. vii. 14. Not only *I am* his Father, and he *is* my Son by nature and eternal promanation, but *I will be* his Father, and he *shall be* my Son by wonderful conception, and this his sonship shall be the fountain and foundation of every gracious relation between me and fallen man.

3. It is said of Christ, *When God bringeth his first-begotten into the world, let all the angels of God worship him*. That is, either when he is brought into this lower world at his nativity, let the angels attend and honour him, or when he is brought into the world above at his ascension to enter upon his mediatorial kingdom, or when he shall bring him again into the world to judge the world, then let the highest creatures worship him. God will not suffer an angel to continue in heaven that will not be in subjection to Christ, and pay adoration to him, and he will at last make the fallen angels and wicked men to confess his divine power and authority, and to fall before him; they that would not have him to reign, must then be brought forth and slain before him. The proof of this is taken out of Psal. xcvi. 7. *Worship him, all ye gods*, that is, all ye that are superior to men, own your selves to be inferior to Christ in nature and power.

4. God hath said concerning Christ, *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever*, &c. ver. 8, 9, 10, 11, 12. But of the angels he hath only said, *that he hath made them spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire*, ver. 7. Now upon comparing what he here saith of the angels, with what he saith to Christ, the vast inferiority of the angels to Christ will plainly appear.

1. What doth God say here of the angels? *He maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire*. This we have in Psal. civ. 4. where it seems to be more immediately spoken of the winds and lightning, but is here applied to the angels, whose agency the divine providence makes use of in the winds, and in thunder and lightnings. Here, 1. The office of the angels; they are God's ministers or servants to do his pleasure; it is the glory of God that he has such servants; it is yet more so that he does not need them. 2. How the angels are qualified for this service: he makes them spirits and a flame of fire, i. e. he endows them with light and zeal, with activity and ability, readiness and resolution to do his pleasure: they are no more than what God has made them to be, and they are servants to the Son as well as to the Father. But,

2. Observe, How much greater things are said of Christ by the Father. Here two passages of scripture are quoted, one out of Psal. xlv. 6, 7. where God declares of Christ, 1. His true and real divinity, and that with much pleasure and affection, not grudging him that glory. *Thy throne, O God*. Here one person calls another person God, O God. And if God the Father declares him to be so, he must be really and truly so, for God calls persons and things as they are. And now let who will deny him to be essentially God at their peril, but let us own and honour him as God; for if he had not been God, he had never been fit to have done the mediator's work, or to have worn the mediator's crown. 2. God declares his dignity and dominion, as having a throne, a kingdom, and a scepter of that kingdom. He has all right, rule, authority, and power, both as the God of nature, grace and glory, and as Mediator; and so he is adequate and sufficient to all the intents and purposes of his mediatorial kingdom. 3. God declares the eternal duration of the dominion and dignity of Christ founded upon the divinity of his person. *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever*, from everlasting to everlasting, through all the ages of time, maugre all the attempts of earth and hell to undermine and overthrow it, and through all the endless ages of eternity, when time shall be no more. This distinguishes Christ's

throne from all earthly thrones, which are tottering, and will at length tumble down; but the throne of Christ shall be as the days of heaven. 4. God declares of Christ the perfect equity of his administration, and of the execution of his power, through all the parts of his government. A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of thy kingdom, ver. 8. He came righteously to the scepter, and he uses it in perfect righteousness; and the righteousness of his government proceeds from the righteousness of his person, from an essential eternal love of righteousness and hatred of iniquity, not merely from considerations of prudence or interest, but from an inward and immovable principle; *Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest iniquity*, ver. 9. Christ came to fulfil all righteousness, to bring in an everlasting righteousness, and he was righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works. He has recommended righteousness to men, and restored it among them as a most excellent and amiable thing. He came to finish transgression, and to make an end of sin, as a hateful as well as hurtful thing. 5. God declares of Christ how he was qualified for the office of mediator, and how he was installed and confirmed in it, ver. 9. *Therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows*.

1. Christ hath the name *Messiah* from his being anointed. God's anointing of Christ signifies both his qualifying of him for the office of the mediator with the holy Spirit and all his graces, and likewise his inauguration of him into the office, as prophets, priests, and kings, were by anointing. *God, even thy God*, imports the confirmation of Christ in the office of mediator by the covenant of redemption and peace, that was between the Father and the Son. God is the God of Christ, as Christ is man and mediator.

2. This anointing of Christ was with the oil of gladness, which signifies both the gladness and cheerfulness with which Christ undertook and went through the office of mediator, finding himself so absolutely sufficient for it, and also that joy that was set before him as the reward of his service and sufferings, that crown of glory and gladness he should wear for ever after the suffering of death.

3. This anointing of Christ was above the anointing of his fellows. *God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows*. Who are Christ's fellows? Has he any equals? Not as God, except the Father and Spirit, but these are not here meant. But as man he has his fellows, and as an anointed person, but his unction is beyond all theirs. 1. Above the angels, who may be said to be his fellows, as they are the sons of God by creation, and God's messengers, whom he employs in his service. 2. Above all prophets, priests, and kings that ever were anointed with oil, to be employed in the service of God on earth. 3. Above all the saints, who are his brethren, children of the same father, as he was a partaker with them of flesh and blood.

4. Above all those that were related to him as man, above all the house of David, all the tribe of Judah, all his brethren and kinsmen in the flesh. All God's other anointed ones, had only the Spirit in a certain measure, Christ had the Spirit above measure, without any limitation. None therefore goes through his work as Christ did, none takes so much pleasure in it as Christ does; for he was anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows.

The other passage of scripture in which is the superior excellence of Christ to the angels, is taken out of Psal. cii. 25, 26, 27. and is thus recited here.

10. And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands. 11. They shall perish, but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; 12. And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.

In these verses the omnipotency of the Lord Jesus Christ is declared, as it appears both in creating the world, and in changing it.

1. In creating the world, ver. 10. *And, Thou Lord in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands*. The Lord Christ had the original right to govern the world, because he made the world in the beginning; his right, as mediator, was by commission from the Father; his right as God with the Father was absolute, resulting from his creating power. This power he had before the beginning of the world, and he exerted it in giving a beginning and being to the world. He must therefore be no part of the world himself, for then he must give himself a beginning. He was *πρὸ πάντων*, before all things, and by him all things consist, Col. i. 17. Not only above all things in condition, but before all things in existence; and therefore must be God and self-existent. He laid the foundations of the earth, did not only introduce new forms into pre-existent matter, but made out of nothing the foundations of the earth, the *primordia rerum*; he not only founded the earth, but the heavens too are the work of his hands, both the habitation and the inhabitants,

inhabitants, the hosts of heaven, the angels themselves, and therefore he must needs be infinitely superior to them.

2. In changing the world that he has made, and here the mutability of this world is brought in to illustrate the immutability of Christ.

1. This world is mutable, all created nature is so; this world has passed through many changes, and shall pass through more; all these changes are by the permission, and under the direction, of Christ that made the world, *ver. 11, 12. They shall perish, they shall all wax old as doth a garment; as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed.* This our visible world, both the earth and visible heavens, are growing old. Not only men, and beasts, and trees, grow old, but this world itself grows old, and is hastening to its dissolution; it changes like a garment, has lost much of its beauty and strength; it grew old betimes on the first apostasy, and it has been waxing older and growing weaker ever since; it bears the symptoms of a dying world. But then its dissolution shall not be its utter destruction, but its change. Christ will fold up this world as a garment, not to be abused any longer, not to be any longer used so as it has been. Let us not then set our hearts upon that which is not what we take it to be, and will not be what it now is. Sin has made a great change in the world for the worse, and Christ will make a great change in it for the better: *We look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.* Let the consideration of this wean us from the present world, and make us watchful, diligent, and desirous of that better world, and let us wait on Christ to change us into a meetness for that new world that is approaching, we cannot enter into it till we be new creatures.

2. Christ is immutable. Thus the Father testifies of him, *Thou remainest, thy years shall not fail.* Christ is the same in himself, the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever, and the same to his people in all the changes of time. And this may well support all that have an interest in Christ, under all the changes they meet with in the world, and under all they feel in themselves. Christ is immutable and immortal, his years shall not fail. This may comfort us under all decays of nature that we may observe in our selves or in our friends, though our flesh and heart fail, and our days are hastening to an end. Christ lives to take care of us while we live, and of ours when we are gone, and this should quicken us all to make our interest in him clear and sure, that our spiritual and eternal life may be hid with Christ in God.

13. But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool? 14. Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?

This concludes the comparison between Christ and the angels, and the preference of Christ to them; God never said to the angels what he has said to Christ.

1. What hath God said to Christ? He hath said, *Sit thou at my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool*, Psal. cx. 1. *i. e.* receive thou glory, dominion, and rest, and remain in the administration of thy mediatorial kingdom, until all thine enemies shall either be made thy friends by conversion, or thy footstool. Note, 1. Christ Jesus has his enemies, would one think it? Enemies even among men, enemies to his sovereignty, to his cause, to his people; such as will not have him to reign over them. Let us not think it strange then if we have our enemies. Christ never did any thing to make men his enemies; he has done a great deal to make them all his friends and his Father's friends, and yet he has his enemies. 2. All the enemies of Christ shall be made his footstool, either by *humble submission* and entire subjection to his will, casting themselves down at his feet, or by *utter destruction*; he shall trample upon those that continue obstinate, and shall triumph over them. 3. God the Father hath undertaken for this, and he will see it done, yea he will himself do it; and though it be not done presently, it shall certainly be done, and Christ waits for it; and so must Christians wait till God has wrought all their works in them, for them, and by them. 4. Christ shall go on to rule and reign till this is done; he shall not leave any of his great designs unfinished, he shall go on conquering and to conquer. And it becomes his people to go on in their duty, being what he would have them to be doing, what he would have them to do, avoiding what he would have them to avoid, bearing what he would have them to bear, till he makes them conquerors, and more than conquerors, over all their spiritual enemies.

2. What hath God said of the angels? *He never said to them as he said to Christ, Sit ye at my right hand*; but he has said of them here, that *they are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be the heirs of salvation.* Note, 1. What the angels are as to their nature, they are spirits, *i. e.* without bodies, or inclination to bodies, and yet they can assume bodies, and appear in them when God pleases. They are spirits, incorporeal, intelligent, active substances, they excel in wisdom and strength. 2. What the angels are as to their office, they are ministering spirits. Christ, as Mediator, is the great minister of God in the great

work of redemption. The holy Spirit is the great minister of God and Christ, in the application of this redemption; angels are ministering spirits under the blessed Trinity, to execute the divine will and pleasure, they are the ministers of divine providence.

3. The angels are sent forth for this end, to minister to them who shall be the heirs of salvation. Here observe, 1. The description given of the saints, *they are heirs of salvation*; at present they are under age, heirs, not inheritors. They are heirs, because they are the children of God; *if children, then heirs.* Let us make sure that we are children by adoption and regeneration, having made a covenant-reignation of ourselves to God, and walking before him in a gospel conversation, and then we are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. 2. The dignity and privilege of the saints, the angels are sent forth to minister for them. Thus they have done in attending and acting at the giving forth of the law, in fighting the battles of the saints, in destroying their enemies. They still minister for them in opposing the malice and power of evil spirits, in protecting and keeping their bodies, pitching their tents about theirs, instructing, quickening and comforting their souls under Christ and the Holy Ghost; and thus they shall do in gathering all the saints together at the last day. Bless God for the ministration of angels, keep in God's way, and take the comfort of this promise, that he will give his angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. *They shall bear you up in their hands, lest you dash your feet against a stone*, Psal. xci. 11, 12.

CHAP. II.

In this chapter the apostle, 1. Makes some application of the doctrine laid down in the chapter foregoing, concerning the excellency of the person of Christ, both by way of exhortation and argument, *ver. 1, 2, 3, 4.* 2. Enlarges farther upon the preeminence of Christ above the angels, *ver. 5, 6, 7.* 3. He proceeds to remove the scandal of the cross, *ver. 10—16.* 4. To assert the incarnation of Christ, taking upon him not the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham, and assigns the reason of his so doing, *ver. 16, to the end.*

1. **T**HEREFORE we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. 2. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; 3. How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; 4. God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the holy Ghost, according to his own will?

The apostle proceeds in the plain profitable method of doctrine, reason, and use, through this epistle. Here we have,

1. The application of the truths before asserted and proved; this is brought in by the illative particle *therefore*, with which this chapter begins, and which shews its connexion with the former; where the apostle having proved Christ to be superior to the angels, by whose ministry the law was given, and therefore that the gospel dispensation must be more excellent than the legal, he now comes to apply this doctrine both by way of exhortation and argument.

1. By way of exhortation, *ver. 1. Therefore we ought to give the more diligent heed to the things which we have heard.* This is the first way by which we are to shew our esteem of Christ and of the gospel. It is the great concern of every one under the gospel to give the most earnest heed to all gospel discoveries and directions, *i. e.* to prize them highly in our judgments as matters of the greatest importance; to hearken to them diligently in all the opportunities we have for that purpose; to read them frequently, to meditate on them closely, and to mix faith with them; to embrace them in our hearts and affections, to retain them in our memories, and finally to regulate our words and actions according to them.

2. By way of argument, he adds strong motives to enforce the exhortation, 1. From the great loss we shall sustain if we do not take this earnest heed to things we have heard, *we shall let them slip.* They will leak and run out of our heads, lips, and lives, and we shall be great losers by our neglect. Learn, 1. That when we have received gospel truths into our minds, we are in danger of letting them slip. Our minds and memories are like a leaking vessel, they do not, without much care, retain what is poured into them, this proceeds from the corruption of our natures, the enmity and subtilty of Satan, he steals away the word, from the entanglements and snares of the world, the thorns that choke the good seed. 2. That those meet with an inconceivable loss, who let gospel-truths which they had received slip out of their minds; they have lost a treasure far better than thousands of gold and silver; the seed is lost, their time and pains in

in hearing lost, and their hopes of a *good harvest* lost; all is lost if the gospel be lost. 3. This consideration should be a strong motive both to our *attention* to the gospel, and *retention* of it; and indeed if we do not well attend, so we shall not long retain the word of God; slighty hearers will soon be forgetful hearers. 2. Another argument is taken from that dreadful punishment we shall incur if we do not do this duty. A more dreadful punishment than those fell under who neglected and disobeyed the law, *ver. 2, 3, 4.* Here observe,

1. How the law is described: It was the *word spoken by angels, and declared to be stedfast*: It was the word *spoken by angels*, because given by the ministration of angels, they sounding the trumpet, and perhaps forming the words according to God's direction; and God as judge will make use of the angels to sound the trumpet a second time, and gather all to his tribunal to receive their sentence, as they have conformed or not conformed to the law. *And this law is declared to be stedfast*; it is like the promise *yea and amen*; it is truth and faithfulness, and it will abide and have its force whether men obey it or no; *for every transgression and disobedience will receive a just recompence of reward.* If men trifle with the law of God, the law will not trifle with them; it *has taken hold* of the sinners of former ages, and *will take hold* of them in all ages. God, as a righteous governour and judge, when he had given forth the law, would not let the contempt and breach of it go unpunished; but he has from time to time reckoned with the transgressors of it, and recompensed them according to the nature and aggravation of their disobedience. Observe, The severest punishment God ever inflicted upon sinners is no more than what sin deserves; *it is a just recompence of reward*; punishments are as just and as much due to sin, as rewards are to obedience, yea more due than rewards are to imperfect obedience.

2. How the gospel is described. *It is salvation, a great salvation, so great salvation*, that no other salvation can compare with it; so great that none can fully express, no, nor yet conceive how great it is. It is a great salvation that the gospel discovers, for it discovers a *great Saviour*, one that has manifested God to be *reconciled* to our nature, and *reconcilable* to our persons: It shews how we may be saved from *so great sin*, and *so great misery*, and be restored to *so great holiness*, and *so great happiness*: The gospel discovers to us a *great Sanctifier*, to qualify us for salvation, and to bring us to the Saviour; the gospel unfolds a *great and excellent dispensation of grace*, a new covenant; the great charter, deed and instrument is settled and secured to all those that come into the bond of the covenant.

3. How sinning against the gospel is described. It is declared *to be a neglect of this great salvation*, it is a contempt put upon the saving grace of God in Christ, *making light of it*, not caring for it, not thinking it worth their while to acquaint themselves with it, not regarding either the *worth* of gospel-grace, or their own *want* of it, and undone state without it; not using their endeavours to discern the *truth* of it, and assent to it, nor to *discern* the *goodness* of it, so as to approve of it, or apply it to themselves. In these things they discover a plain neglect of this great salvation. Let us all take heed that we be not found among those wicked, wretched sinners that neglect the grace of the gospel.

4. How the misery of such sinners is described, and it is declared to be unavoidable, *ver. 3.* *How shall we escape?* This intimates, 1. That the despisers of this salvation are condemned already, under arrest, and in the hands of justice already. So they were by the sin of Adam; and they have strengthened their bonds by their personal transgression, *John iii. 18.* *He that believeth not is condemned already.* 2. There is no escaping out of this condemned state, but by accepting the great salvation discovered in the gospel; as for those that neglect it, the wrath of God is upon them, and it abides upon them, they cannot disengage themselves, they cannot emerge, they cannot get from under the curse. 3. That there is a yet more aggravated curse and condemnation waiting for all those that despise the grace of God in Christ, and that most heavy curse they cannot escape; they can neither *conceal their persons*, at the great day, nor *deny the fact*, nor *bribe the judge*, nor *break the prison*. There is no door of mercy left open for them, there shall be *no more sacrifice for sin*, they are irrecoverably lost. The unavoidableness of the misery of such is here expressed by way of question, *How shall we escape?* It is an appeal to universal reason, to the consciences of sinners themselves, it is a challenge to all their power and policy, to all their interest and alliances, whether they, or any for them, can find out, or can force out, a way of escape from the vindictive justice and wrath of God. It intimates, that the neglecters of this great salvation, will be left not only *without power*, but *without plea and excuse* at the judgment-day, if they be asked what they have to say that the sentence should not be executed upon them, they will be *speechless*, and self-condemned by their own consciences, even to a greater degree of misery than those fell under, that neglected the authority of the law, or that sinned without the law.

3. Another argument to enforce the exhortation is taken from the *dignity and excellency of the person* by whom the gospel began to be spoken, *ver. 3.* *It began at first to be spoken by the Lord*, that is, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is Jehovah, *the Lord of life and glory, Lord of all*, and as such possessed of unerring and infallible wisdom, infinite and inexhaustible goodness, unquestionable and

unchangeable veracity and faithfulness, absolute sovereignty and authority, and irresistible power. This great Lord of all was the first that begun to speak it *plainly and clearly without types and shadows*, as it was before he came. Now surely it may be expected that *all will reverence this Lord*, and take heed to a gospel that began to be spoken by one that *spoke so as never man spoke.*

4. Another argument is taken from the character of those that were witnesses to Christ and the gospel, *ver. 3, 4.* *It was confirmed to us by them that heard him, God also bearing them witness.* Observe, 1. The promulgation of the gospel was continued and confirmed by those that heard Christ, by the *evangelist* and *apostles* who were eye and ear-witnesses of what Jesus Christ *began both to do and to teach*, Acts i. 1. These witnesses could have no worldly end or interest of their own to serve hereby. Nothing could induce them to give in their evidence but the Redeemer's glory, and their own and others salvation; they exposed themselves by their testimony to the loss of all that was dear to them in this life, and many of them sealed it with their blood. 2. *God himself bore witness* to those that were witnesses for Christ; he testified that they were authorised and sent by him to preach Christ and salvation by him to the world. And how did he bear them witness? Not only by giving them *great peace* in their own minds, *great patience* under all their sufferings, and *unspeakable courage* and joy: Though these were witnesses to themselves, but he bore them witness *by signs and wonders, and diverse miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost according to his will.* 1. With *signs*: Signs of his gracious presence with them, and of his power working by them. 2. *Wonders*: Works quite beyond the power of nature, and out of the course of nature, filling the spectator with wonder and admiration, stirring them up to attend to the doctrine preached, and to enquire into it. 3. *Diverse miracles* or mighty works, in which an almighty agency did appear beyond all reasonable controversy. 3. *Gifts of the Holy Ghost*, qualifying, enabling, and exciting them to do the work to which they were called; *divisions or distributions of the Holy Ghost, diversities of gifts*, 1 Cor. xii. 4, &c. And all this *according to God's own will*: It was the will of God that we should have *sure footing* for our faith, and a *strong foundation* for our hope in receiving the gospel. As at the giving forth of the law there were signs and wonders by which God testified the authority and excellency of it; so he witnessed to the gospel by more and greater miracles, as to a more excellent and abiding dispensation.

5. For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak. 6. But one in a certain place testified saying, What is man that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man that thou visitest him? 7. Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: 8. Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing *that is not put under him*. But now we see not yet all things put under him. 9. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

The apostle having made this serious application of the doctrine of the personal excellency of Christ above the angels, he now returns to that pleasant subject again, and pursues it farther, *ver. 5.* *For unto the angels hath he not put into subjection the world to come, whereof we speak.* 1. Here the apostle lays down a *negative* proposition, including a *positive* one, that the state of the gospel church, which is here called *the world to come*, is *not subjected to the angels*, but under the special care and direction of the Redeemer himself. Neither the state in which the church is at present, nor that more completely restored state to which it shall arrive when the prince of this world is cast out, and the kingdoms of the earth shall become the kingdom of Christ, is left to the government of the angels; but Jesus Christ will take to him *his great power, and will reign.* He does not make that use of the ministration of angels, to give *the gospel* as he did *the law*, which was the state of the *old* or antiquated world. *This new world* is committed to Christ, and only put in absolute subjection to him in all spiritual and eternal concerns. Christ has the administration of the gospel church, which at once speaks Christ's honour, and the church's happiness and safety. It is certain, that neither the first creation of the gospel church, nor its after-education or administration, nor its final judgment and perfection are committed to the angels, but to Christ: God would not *put so great a trust in his holy ones*; his angels were *too weak* for such a charge. 2. We have a scripture account of *that blessed Jesus* to whom the gospel world is put into subjection: It is taken from *Psal. viii. 4, 5, 6, 7.* *But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the Son of man that thou visitest him? &c.* These words are to be considered both as

applicable to mankind in general, and as *applied* here to the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. As *applicable* to mankind in general; where we have an affectionate, thankful expostulation with the great God concerning his wonderful condescension and kindness to the sons of men. 1. In remembering them, or being mindful of them, when yet they had no being, but in the councils of divine love: The favours of God to men all spring up out of his eternal thoughts and purposes of mercy for them; as all our dutiful regards to God spring forth from our remembrance of him. God is always mindful of us, let us never be forgetful of him. 2. In visiting him, God's purposes of favours for men, is productive of gracious visits to them; he comes to see us, how it is with us, what we ail, what we want, what dangers we are exposed to, what difficulties we have to encounter; and by his visitation our spirit is preserved. Let us so remember God, as daily to approach him in a way of duty. 3. In making him the head of all the creatures in this lower world, the top-stone of this building, the chief of the *ways of God on earth*, and only a *little lower than the angels*, in place and respect to the body while here, and to be made *like the angels*, and *equal to the angels at the resurrection of the just*, Luke xx. 36. 4. In crowning him with glory and honour, the honour of having noble powers and faculties of *soul*, excellent organs and parts of *body*; whereby he is allied to both worlds, capable of serving the interests of both worlds, and of enjoying the happiness of both. 5. In giving him right to, and dominion over, the inferior creatures, which did continue so long as he continued in his allegiance and duty to God.

2. This is here plainly applied to the Lord Jesus Christ; and the whole that is here said, can only be applied to him, *ver. 8, 9*. And here you may observe, 1. What is the moving cause of all the kindness God shews to men in giving Christ for them, and to them; and *that is the grace of God*: For what is man? 2. What are the fruits of this free grace of God with respect to the gift of Christ for us and to us, as related in this scripture testimony. 1. That God was *mindful of Christ* for us in the covenant of redemption. 2. That God *visited Christ* on our account; and it was concluded between them, that in the fulness of time Christ should come into the world as the great archetypal sacrifice. 3. That God had *made him a little lower than the angels*, in his *being made man*, that he might suffer and humble himself to death. 4. That God crowned *the human nature of Christ with glory and honour* in his being perfectly holy, and having *the Spirit without measure*, and by an ineffable union with the divine nature in the second person of the Trinity, *the fulness of the Godhead dwelling in him bodily*, that by his sufferings he might make satisfaction, *tasting death for every man*, i. e. sensibly feeling and undergoing the bitter agonies of that shameful, painful, and cursed death of the cross; hereby putting all mankind into a new state of trial. 5. That as a reward of his humiliation in suffering death, he was *crowned with glory and honour*, advanced to the highest dignity in heaven, and having absolute dominion over all things; thus accomplishing that ancient scripture in Christ which never was so accomplished or fulfilled in any mere man that ever was upon earth. And now having mentioned the death of Christ, the apostle proceeds,

10. For it became him, for whom *are* all things, and by whom *are* all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. 11. For both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, *are* all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, 12. Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee. 13. And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold, I and the children which God hath given me.

To prevent and remove the scandal of the cross; and this he does by shewing both *how it became God* that Christ should suffer, and how much *man should be benefited* by those sufferings.

1. How it *became God* that Christ should suffer, *ver. 10*. For it became him, for whom *are* all things, and to whom *are* all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. Where, 1. God is described as the *final end* and *first cause* of all things, and as such it became him to secure his own glory in all that he did, not only to act so as that he might in nothing dishonour himself, but that he might from every thing have a revenue of glory. 2. He is declared to have acted up to this glorious character in the work of redemption, and that both as to the choice of the end, and means.

1. In the *choice of the end*; and that was to *bring many sons to glory*, to *present* glory in enjoying the glorious privileges of the gospel, and to *future* glory in heaven, which will be glory indeed, an exceeding eternal weight of glory.

Here observe, 1. That we must be the *sons of God* both by adoption and regeneration, before we can be *brought to the glory of heaven*. Heaven is the inheritance, and only those that are the children,

are heirs of that inheritance. 2. All true believers are the children of God; *to them that receive Christ, he has granted the power and privilege of being the children of God, even to as many as believe on his name*, John i. 12. 3. That though the sons of God are but a few in one place, and at one time; yet when they shall be all brought together, it will appear that they are *many*. Christ is *the first-born among many brethren*. 4. That all the sons of God, how many soever they are, or however dispersed and divided, shall at length be brought together to glory.

2. In the *choice of the means*. 1. In finding out such a person as should be *the captain of our salvation*; those that are saved must come to that salvation under the conduct of a captain and leader sufficient for that purpose; and they must be all listed under the banner of this captain; *they must endure hardship as good soldiers of Christ*; they must follow their captain, and they that do so shall be brought safely off, and shall inherit great glory and honour.

2. In making this captain of our salvation *perfect through sufferings*. God the Father made the Lord Jesus Christ the captain of our salvation; that is, he consecrated, he appointed him to that office, he gave him a commission for it, and he made him a *perfect captain*; he had perfection of wisdom, and courage, and strength by the Spirit of the Lord, which he had without measure; he was made *perfect through sufferings*; that is, *he perfected* the work of our redemption by shedding his blood, and was *thereby perfectly qualified* to be a mediator between God and man: He found his way to the *crown by the cross*, and so must his people too. The excellent Dr. Owen observes, that the Lord Christ being consecrated and perfected through suffering, hath consecrated the way of suffering for all his followers to pass through unto glory; and hereby their sufferings are made necessary and unavoidable, they are hereby made honourable, useful, and profitable.

2. He shews how much they would be benefited by the cross and sufferings of Christ; as there was nothing *unbecoming* God and Christ, so there was that which would be very *beneficial* to men in these sufferings. Hereby they are brought into a *near union* with Christ, and into a *very endearing relation*.

1. Into a *near union*, *ver. 11*. *Both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one*. Observe, Christ is *he that sanctifieth*, he hath purchased and sent the sanctifying Spirit: He is the head of all sanctifying influences. The Spirit sanctifieth on the Spirit of Christ. True believers are *they who are sanctified*, endowed with holy principles and powers, separated and set apart from mean and vile uses, to high and holy uses and purposes; for so they must be before they can be brought to glory. Now Christ that is the agent in this work of sanctification, and Christians that are the recipient subjects, are *all of one*. How? Why, 1. They are all of *one heavenly Father*, and that is God. God is the Father of Christ by eternal generation, and by miraculous conception, &c. of Christians by adoption and regeneration. 2. They are of *one earthly father*, Adam. Christ and believers have the same human nature. 3. Of *one Spirit*, holy and heavenly disposition; *the same mind is in them that was in Christ*, though not in the same measure; the same Spirit informs and actuates the head and all the members.

2. Into an *endearing relation*. This results from the union: And here first he declares what this relation is, and then he quotes three texts out of the Old Testament to illustrate and prove it.

1. He declares *what this relation is*; he and believers being all of one; he therefore is not ashamed to call *them brethren*. Observe, 1. Christ and believers are brethren; *not only bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh*, but *spirit of his Spirit*; brethren by the whole blood, in what is *heavenly*, as well as in what is *earthly*.

2. Christ is not ashamed to own this relation; he is *not ashamed* to call them brethren, which is wonderful goodness and condescension in him, considering their *meannefs* by nature, and *vileness* by sin; but he will never be ashamed of any that are not ashamed of him, and that take care not to be a shame and reproach to him, and to themselves.

2. He illustrates this from three texts of scripture. The first is out of *Psal. xxii. 22*. *I will declare thy name unto my brethren; in the midst of the church will I sing praises unto thee*. This psalm was an eminent prophecy of Christ; it begins with his words on the cross, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Now here it is foretold, 1. That Christ should have a church, or *congregation*, in the world, a company of volunteers, freely willing to follow him. 2. That these should not only be brethren to *one another*, but to *Christ himself*.

3. That he would declare his Father's *name* to them, that is, *his nature, attributes, his mind, and will*: And this he did in *his own person* while he dwelt among us, and by *his Spirit* poured out upon his disciples, enabling them to spread the knowledge of God in the world, from one generation to another, to the end of the world.

4. That Christ would *sing praise* to his Father in the church. The glory of the Father was what Christ had in his eye; his heart was set upon it, and he laid out himself for it, and he would have *his people to join with him* in it.

The second scripture is quoted from *Psal. xviii. 2*. *And again I will put my trust in him*. That psalm sets forth the troubles that David, as a type of Christ, met with, and how he in all his troubles *put his trust in God*. Now this shews, that besides his divine

divine nature, which needed no supports, he was to take another nature upon him, that would want those supports that none but God could give. He suffered and trusted as our head and president. Owen *in loc.* His brethren must suffer and trust too.

The third scripture is taken from *Isa. viii. 18. Behold, I and the children which God hath given me.* This proves Christ really and truly man, for parents and children are of the same nature with Christ; children were given him of the Father in the council of his eternal love, and that covenant of peace that was between them. And they are given to Christ at their conversion. When they take hold of his covenant, then Christ receives them, rules over them, rejoices in them, perfects all their affairs, takes them up to heaven, and there presents them to his Father, *Behold, I and the children which thou hast given me.*

14. Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same: that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; 15. And deliver them who through fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage. 16. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. 17. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren; that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest, in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people: 18. For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.

Here the apostle proceeds to assert the incarnation of Christ, as taking upon him not the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham; and he shews the reason and design of his so doing.

1. The incarnation of Christ is asserted, *ver. 16. Verily he took upon him not the nature of angels, but he took upon him the seed of Abraham.* He took part of flesh and blood, though as God he pre-existed from all eternity; yet in fulness of time he took one of our nature into union with his divine nature, and became really and truly man. He did not lay hold of angels, but he laid hold of the seed of Abraham. The angels fell, and he let them go, and lie under the desert, defilement, and dominion of their sin, without hope or help. Christ never designed to be the Saviour of the fallen angels; as their tree fell, so it lies, and must lie to eternity, and therefore he did not assume their nature: the nature of angels could not be an atoning sacrifice for the sin of man. Now Christ resolving to recover the seed of Abraham, and raise them up from their fallen state, he took upon him the human nature from one descended from the loins of Abraham, that the same nature that had sinned, might suffer, to restore human nature to a state of hope and trial; and all that accepted of mercy to a state of special favour and salvation. Now there is hope and help for the chief of sinners in and through Christ. Here is a price paid sufficient for all, and suitable to all, for it was in our nature. Let us all then know the day of our gracious visitation, and improve that distinguishing mercy which has been shewed to fallen men, not to the fallen angels.

2. The reasons and designs of the incarnation of Christ are declared, 1. *Because the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he must take part of the same, and be made like his brethren, ver. 14, 15.* For no higher nor lower nature than man's, that had sinned, could so suffer for the sin of man, as to satisfy the justice of God, and raise man up to a state of hope, and make believers the children of God, and so brethren to Christ. 2. He became man, that he might die; as God, he could not die, and therefore he assumes another nature and state. Here the wonderful love of God appeared, that when Christ knew what he must suffer in our nature, and how he must die in it; yet he so readily took it upon him. The legal sacrifices and offerings God could not accept as a propitiation; a body was prepared for Christ, and he said, *Lo! I come, I delight to do thy will.* 3. That through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, *ver. 14.* The devil was the first sinner, and the first tempter to sin, and sin was the procuring cause of death; and he may be said to have the power of death, as he draws men into sin, the ways whereof are death, and as he is often permitted to terrify the consciences of men with the fear of death, and as he is the executioner of divine justice, haling their souls from their bodies to the tribunal of God, there to receive their doom; and then being their tormenter, as he was before their tempter; in these respects he may be said to have had the power of death.

But now Christ has so far destroyed him that had the power of death, that he can keep none under the power of spiritual death; nor can he draw any into sin, (the procuring cause of death) nor require the soul of any from the body, nor execute the sentence upon any, but who chuse, and continue to be his willing slaves, and persist in their enmity to God. 4. That he might deliver his own people from that slavish fear of death that they are often subject to. This may refer to the Old Testament saints, who were more under a spirit of bondage, because life and immortality were

not so fully brought to light, as now they are by the gospel: Or it may refer to all the people of God, whether under the Old Testament or the New, whose minds are often in perplexing fears about death and eternity. Christ became man, and died to deliver them from those perplexities of soul, by letting them know, that death is not only a conquered enemy, but a reconciled friend, not sent to hurt the soul, or separate it from the love of God, but to put an end to all their grievances and complaints, and to give them a passage to eternal life and blessedness. That death now to them is not in the hand of Satan, but in the hand of Christ, not Satan's servant, but Christ's servant, has not hell following it, but heaven to all that are in Christ. 5. Christ must be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to the justice and honour of God, and to the support and comfort of his people. He must be faithful to God, and merciful to men.

1. In things pertaining to God, to his justice, and to his honour; to make reconciliation for the sins of the people, to make all the attributes of the divine nature, and all the persons subsisting therein harmonize in man's recovery, and fully to reconcile God and man. Observe, 1. There was a great breach and quarrel between God and man by reason of sin. 2. Christ by becoming man and dying hath taken up the quarrel, and made reconciliation so far as that God is ready to receive all into favour and friendship that come to him through Christ.

2. In things pertaining to his people; to their support and comfort, *ver. 18. In that he suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.* Where observe, 1. Christ's passion, he suffered being tempted, and his temptations were not the least part of his sufferings, he was in all things tempted as we are, yet without sin, *chap. iv. 15.* 2. Christ's compassion, he is able to succour them that are tempted. He is touched with a feeling of our infirmities, a sympathizing physician, tender and skilful, he knows how to deal with tempted, sorrowful souls, because he has been himself sick of the same disease, not of sin, but of temptation and trouble of soul: The remembrance of his own sorrows and temptations makes him mindful of the trials of his people, and ready to help them. Here observe, the best of Christians are subject to temptations, to many temptations while in this world; let us never count upon an absolute freedom from temptations in this world. 2. Temptations bring our souls into such distress and danger as to need support and succour. 3. That Christ is ready and willing to succour those that under their temptations apply themselves to him, and that he became man, and was tempted, that he might be every way qualified to succour his people.

C H A P. III.

In this chapter the apostle applies what he had said in the chapter foregoing concerning the priesthood of Christ, 1. In a serious pathetick exhortation, that this great high priest that was discovered to them, might be seriously considered by them, *ver. 1—7.* and then adds many weighty counsels and cautions from *ver. 7, to the end.*

1. WHEREFORE, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the apostle and high priest of our profession, Christ Jesus; 2. Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house. 3. For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, in as much as he who hath builded the house, hath more honour than the house. 4. For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God. 5. And Moses verily was faithful in all his house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; 6. But Christ as a Son over his own house: whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence, and the rejoycing of the hope firm unto the end.

In these verses we have the application of that doctrine laid down in the close of the last chapter concerning the priesthood of our Lord Jesus Christ. And observe,

1. In how fervent and affectionate a manner the apostle exhorts Christians to have this high priest much in their thoughts, and to make him the object of their close and serious consideration; and surely no one in earth or heaven deserves our consideration more than he, that this exhortation might be made the more effectual: Observe,

1. The honourable compellation used of those to whom he wrote. Holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling. 1. Brethren, not only my brethren, but the brethren of Christ, and

and in him brethren to all the saints, all the people of God are brethren, and should love and live like brethren. 2. Holy brethren, holy not only in profession and title, but in principle and practice, in heart and life. This has been turned by some into scorn; these, say they, are the holy brethren, but it is dangerous jesting with such edge-tools; be not mockers, lest your bands be made strong; let those that are thus despised and scorned labour to be holy brethren indeed, and approve themselves so to God; and they need not be ashamed of the title, nor value the scoffs of the profane. The day is coming when those that make this a term of reproach would count it their greatest honour and happiness to be taken into this sacred brotherhood. 3. Partakers of the heavenly calling, partakers of the means of grace, and of the Spirit of grace that came from heaven, and by which Christians are effectually called out of darkness into marvellous light; that calling that brings down heaven into the souls of men, and raises them up to a heavenly temper and conversation, and prepares them to live for ever with God in heaven.

2. The titles he gives to Christ, whom he would have them consider. As first,

1. As the apostle of our profession, the prime minister of the gospel church, a messenger, and a principal messenger, sent of God to men, upon the most important errand, the great revealer of that faith which we profess to hold, and of that hope which we profess to have. 2. Not only the apostle but the high priest too of our profession, the chief officer of the Old Testament as well as the New, the head of the church in every state, and under each dispensation, upon whose satisfaction and intercession we profess to depend for pardon of sin and acceptance with God. 3. As Christ the Messiah anointed and every way qualified for the office both of apostle and high priest. 4. As Jesus our Saviour, our healer, the great physician of souls, typified by the brazen serpent that Moses lifted up in the wilderness, that those who were stung by the fiery serpents, might look to him and be saved.

2. We have the duty we owe to him who bears all these high and honourable titles, and that is to consider him as thus characterized. Consider what he is in himself, and what he is to us, and what he will be to us hereafter and for ever; consider him, fix your thoughts upon him with the greatest attention, and act towards him accordingly, look unto Jesus the author and finisher of your faith. Here observe, 1. Many that profess faith in Christ, have not a due consideration for him, he is not so much thought of, as he deserves to be, and desires to be, by those that expect salvation from him. 2. Close and serious consideration of Christ would be of great advantage to us to increase our acquaintance with, and to engage our love and our obedience to him, and reliance on him. 3. Even those that are holy brethren, and partakers of the heavenly calling, have need to stir up one another to think more of Christ than they do, to have him more in their minds; the best of his people think too seldom and too slightly of him. 4. We must consider Christ as he is described to us in the scriptures, and form our apprehensions of him from thence, not from any vain conceptions and fancies of our own.

3. We have several arguments drawn up to enforce this duty of considering Christ the apostle and high priest of our profession. The first is taken from his fidelity, *ver. 2.* He was faithful to him that appointed him, as Moses was in all his house. 1. Christ is an appointed mediator, God the Father hath sent and sealed him to that office, and therefore his mediation is acceptable to the Father. 2. He is faithful to that appointment, punctually observing all the rules and orders of his mediation, and fully executing the trust reposed in him, by his Father and by his people. 3. That he is as faithful to him that hath appointed him, as Moses was in all his house. Moses was faithful in the discharge of his office to the Jewish church in the Old Testament, and so is Christ under the New; this was a proper argument to urge upon the Jews who had so high an opinion of the faithfulness of Moses, and yet his faithfulness was but typical of Christ's. 2. Another argument is taken from the superior glory and excellence of Christ above Moses, *ver. 3, 4, 5, 6.* therefore they were more obliged to consider Christ. 1. Christ was a maker of the house, Moses but a member in it. By the house we are to understand the church of God, *i. e.* the people of God incorporated together under Christ their maker and head, and under subordinate officers, according to his law, observing his institutions; Christ is the maker of this house of the church in all ages, Moses was a minister in the house, he was instrumental under Christ in governing and edifying the house, but Christ is the maker of all things; for he is God, and one no less than God could build the church, either lay the foundation, or carry on the superstructure. No less power was requisite to make the church, than to make the world; the world was made out of nothing, the church made out of materials altogether unfit for such a building. Christ, who is God, drew the platform of the church, provided the materials, and by almighty power disposed them to receive the form; he has compacted and united this his house, and has settled the orders of it, and crowned all with his own presence, which is the true glory of this house of God. 2. Christ was the master of this house, as well as the maker,

ver. 5, 6. This house is styled his house as the Son of God. Moses was only a faithful servant for a testimony of those things that were to be spoken after Christ; as the eternal Son of God is the rightful owner and sovereign ruler of the church, Moses was only a typical governor for a testimony of all those things relating to the church, which would be more clearly, completely, and comfortably revealed in the gospel by the Spirit of Christ; and therefore Christ is worthy of more glory than Moses, and of greater regard and consideration; this argument the apostle concludes, 1. With a comfortable accommodation of it to himself and all true believers, *ver. 6.* whose house are we: Each of us *personally* as we are the temples of the Holy Ghost, and Christ dwells in us by faith, all of us *jointly* as we are united by the bonds of graces, truths, ordinances, gospel discipline and devotions. 2. With a characteristick description of those persons that constitute this house; *if we hold fast the confidence, and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end, i. e.* if we maintain a bold and open profession of the truths of the gospel, upon which our hopes of grace and glory are built, and live upon and up to those hopes, as to have a holy rejoicing in them, which shall abide firm to the end notwithstanding all that we may meet with in so doing. So that you see there must not only be a setting out well in the ways of Christ, but a steadfastness and perseverance therein unto the end. We have here a direction what those must do that would partake of the dignity and privileges of the household of Christ. 1. They must take the truths of the gospel into their heads and hearts. 2. They must build their hopes of happiness upon those truths. 3. They must make an open profession of these truths. 4. They must live so up to them as to keep their evidences clear, and may rejoice in hope, and then they must in all persevere to the end. In a word, they must walk closely, comfortably, courageously, and constantly, in the faith and practice of the gospel, that their Master when he comes may own and approve them.

7. Wherefore as the holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice, 8. Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: 9. When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. 10. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in *their* heart; and they have not known my ways. 11. So I sware in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest. 12. Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. 13. But exhort one another daily while it is called, To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. 14. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end; 15. While it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. 16. For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses. 17. But with whom was he grieved forty years? *was it* not with them that had sinned, whose carcases fell in the wilderness? 18. And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? 19. So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

Here the apostle proceeds, pressing upon them serious counsels and cautions to the close of the chapter, and he recites a passage out of *Psal. xcv. 7, &c.* where observe,

(1.) What he counsels them to do, and that is, to give a speedy and present attention to the call of Christ. Hear his voice, assent to approve of and consider what God in Christ speaks unto you, and apply it to your selves with suitable affections and endeavours, and set about it this very day, for to morrow it may be too late. (2.) What he cautions them against, *viz.* hardening their hearts, turning the deaf ear to the calls and counsels of Christ, when he tells you of the evil of sin, the excellency of holiness, the necessity of receiving him by faith as your Saviour, do not shut your ear and heart against such a voice as this. (3.) Whose example he warns them by, even that of the Israelites their fathers in the wilderness, as in the provocation, and day of temptation; this refers to that remarkable passage at Massah Meribah, *Exod. xvii. ver. 2—7.* Observe,

1. Days of temptation are often days of provocation. 2. That to provoke God when he is trying us, and letting us see that we entirely depend, and immediately live upon him, is a provocation with a witness. 3. That our hardening our hearts is the spring of all our other sins. 4. That the sins of others, especially our relations, should be a warning to us. Our fathers sins and punishments should be remembered by us, to deter us from following their evil examples. Now as to the sin of the fathers of the Jews here

here reflected upon, observe, 1. The state in which these fathers were when they thus sinned; they were in the wilderness, brought out of Egypt, but not got into Canaan, the thoughts whereof should have restrained them from sin. 2. The sin they were guilty of: They tempted and provoked God; they distrusted God, and murmured against Moses, and would not attend to the voice of God. 3. The aggravations of their sin: They sinned in the wilderness, where they had a more immediate dependence upon God; they sinned when God was trying them; they sinned when they saw his works: works of wonder wrought for their deliverance out of Egypt, and their support and supply in the wilderness from day to day. They continued thus to sin against God forty years. These were heinous aggravations.

4. The source and spring of such aggravated sins, which were, 1. They erred in their hearts; and these heart-errors produced many other errors in their lips and lives. 2. They did not know God's ways, though he had walked before them; they did not know his ways; neither those ways of his providence, in which he had walked towards them, nor those ways of his precept, in which they ought to have walked towards God; they did not observe either his providences or his ordinances in a right manner.

5. The just and great resentment God had at their sins, and yet the great patience he exercised towards them, *ver. 10. Wherefore I am grieved with that generation, &c.* Note, 1. All sin, especially sin committed by God's professing privileged people, does not only anger and affront God, but it grieves him. 2. God is loth to destroy his people in or for their sin, he waits long to be gracious to them. 3. God keeps an exact account of the time that people go on in sinning against him, and in grieving him by their sins; but that at length, if they by their sins continue to grieve the Spirit of God, their sins shall be made grievous to their own spirits, either in a way of judgment or mercy. 6. The irreversible doom passed upon them at last for their sins. God swore in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest; either the rest of an earthly or heavenly Canaan. Observe, 1. Sin long continued in will kindle the divine wrath, and make it flame out against sinners. 2. That God's wrath will discover itself in its righteous resolution to destroy the impenitent; he will swear in his wrath not rashly but righteously, and his wrath will make their condition a restless condition; there is no resting under the wrath of God. (4.) What use the apostle makes of their awful example, *ver. 12, 13, &c.* He gives the Hebrews a proper caution, and enforces it with an affectionate compellation.

1. He gives the Hebrews a proper caution; the word is *take heed*, *βλέπετε*, look to it; look about you; be upon your guard against enemies both within and without; be circumspect; you see what kept many of your forefathers out of Canaan, and made their carcases fall in the wilderness; take heed lest you fall into the same sin and snare and dreadful sentence. For you see Christ is head of the church, a much greater person than Moses, and your contempt of him must be a greater sin, than their contempt of Moses; and so you are in danger of falling under a severer sentence than they. Observe the ruin of others should be warnings to us to take heed of the rock they split upon; Israel's fall should for ever be a warning to all that come after them; for *all these things happened to them for ensamples*, 1 Cor. x. 11. and should be remembered by us. Take heed; all that would get safe to heaven, must look about them.

2. He enforces the admonition with an affectionate compellation: *Brethren*, not only in the flesh, but in the Lord; brethren whom I love, and for whose welfare I labour and long. And here he enlarges upon the matter of the admonition; *take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.* Where observe, 1. That an heart of unbelief is an evil heart: Unbelief is a great sin, it vitiates the heart of man. 2. That an evil heart of unbelief is at the bottom of all our sinful departures from God; it is a leading step to apostasy; if once we allow ourselves to distrust God, we may soon desert him. 3. That Christian brethren have need to be cautioned against apostasy. *Let them that think they stand, take heed lest they fall.*

3. He subjoins good counsel to the caution, and advises them to that which would be a remedy against this evil heart of unbelief, *viz.* that they should *exhort one another daily, while it is called to day*, *ver. 13.* Observe, 1. We should be doing all the good we can to one another while we are together, which will be but a short and uncertain time. 2. Since to-morrow is none of ours, we must make the best improvement of this day. 3. If Christians do not exhort one another daily, they will be in danger of being hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. Note, 1. There is a great deal of deceitfulness in sin, it appears fair, but is filthy; it appears pleasant, but is pernicious; it promises much, but performs nothing. 2. The deceitfulness of sin is of a hardening nature to the soul; one sin allowed prepares for another; every act of sin confirms the habit; sinning against conscience, is the way to sear the conscience; and therefore it should be the great concern of every one to exhort himself and others to beware of sin.

4. He comforts those that not only set out well, but hold on well, and hold out to the end, *ver. 14. We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast to the*

end. Here observe, 1. The saints privilege; they are made partakers of Christ, that is, of the Spirit, nature, graces, righteousness and life of Christ; they are interested in all that is Christ's, in all that he is, in all that he has done or can do.

2. The condition on which they hold that privilege, and that is, their perseverance in the bold and open profession and practice of Christ and Christianity unto the end. Not but they shall persevere, being kept by the mighty power of God through faith to salvation, but to be pressed thus to it is one means by which Christ helps his people to persevere. This tends to make them watchful and diligent, and so keeps them from apostasy.

Here observe, 1. The same spirit with which Christians set out in the ways of God, they should maintain and evidence to the end. They that begin seriously and with lively affections, and holy resolutions, and humble reliance, should go on in the same spirit. But, 2. There are a great many, who in the beginning of their profession shew a great deal of courage and confidence, but do not hold it fast to the end. 3. Perseverance in faith is the best evidence of the sincerity of our faith.

5. The apostle resumes what he had quoted before from *Psal. xcv. 7, &c.* and he applies it close to those of that generation, *ver. 15, 16, &c.* while it is said *to day if ye will hear, &c.* as if he should say what was recited before from that scripture, belonged not only to former ages, but to you now, and to all that shall come after you; that you take heed you fall not into the same sins, lest you fall under the same condemnation. The apostle tells them, that though some, who had heard the voice of God, did provoke him, yet all did not so. Observe, 1. Though the greatest part of hearers provoked God by unbelief, yet some there were that believed the report. 2. That though the hearing of the word be the ordinary means of salvation, yet if it be not hearkened to, it will expose men more to the anger of God. 3. God will have a remnant that shall be obedient to his voice, and he will take care of such, and make mention of them with honour. 4. That if these should fall in a common calamity, yet they shall partake of eternal salvation, while disobedient hearers perish for ever.

6. And lastly, The apostle puts some queries upon what had been before mentioned, and gives proper answers to them, *ver. 17, 18, 19.* But with whom was he grieved forty years? With them that sinned. And to whom did he swear? &c. From whence observe, 1. That God is only grieved with those of his people that sin against him, and continue in sin. 2. That God is grieved and provoked most by sins publickly committed, by the generality of a nation; when sin becomes epidemical, it is most provoking. 3. That God grieves long, and bears long when pressed with the weight of general and prevailing wickedness, yet he will at length ease himself of publick offenders by publick judgments. 4. That unbelief (and rebellion, which is the consequent of it) is the great damning sin of the world, especially of those that have a revelation of the mind and will of God. This sin shuts up the heart of God, and shuts up the gate of heaven against them; it lays them under the wrath and curse of God, and leaves them there; so that in truth and justice to himself he is obliged to cast them off for ever.

C H A P. IV.

The apostle having in the chapter foregoing set forth the sin and punishment of the ancient Jews, proceeds in this, 1. To declare that our privileges by Christ under the gospel exceed the privileges of the Jewish church under Moses, as a reason why we should make a right improvement of them, ver. 1, 2, 3, 4. 2. Assigns the cause why the ancient Hebrews did profit by their religious privileges, ver. 2. Then, 3. Confirms the privileges of those that believe, and the misery of those that continue in unbelief, ver. 3—10. Then, 4. Concludes with proper and powerful arguments and motives to faith and obedience.

1. **L**ET us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. 2. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. 3. For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, If they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. 4. For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works. 5. And in this place again, If they shall enter into my rest. 6. Seeing therefore it remaineth

maineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached, entred not in because of unbelief: 7. Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. 8. For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day. 9. There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. 10. For he that is entred into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God *did* from his.

Here, 1. The apostle declares that our privileges by Christ under the gospel are not only as great, but greater than those enjoyed under the Mosaical law. And he instances in this, that we have a promise left us of entering into his rest; that is, of entering into a covenant-relation to Christ, and a state of communion with God through Christ, and of growing up therein, till we are made perfect in glory. We have discoveries of this rest, and proposals, and the best directions how we may attain unto it. This promise of spiritual rest, is a promise left us by the Lord Jesus Christ, in his last will and testament, as a precious legacy. Our business is to see to it, that we be the legatees; that we lay our claim to that rest and freedom from the dominion of sin, Satan, and the flesh, by which the souls of men are kept in servitude, and deprived of the true rest of the soul, and may be also set free from the yoke of the law, and all the toilsome ceremonies and services of it, and may enjoy peace with God, in his ordinances, providences, and in our own consciences, and so have the prospect and earnest of perfect and everlasting rest in heaven.

2. He demonstrates the truth of his assertion, that we have as great advantages as they. For, says he, *ver. 2. To us was the gospel preached as well as unto them*; the same gospel for substance was preached under both Testaments, though not so clearly; not in so comfortable a manner under the Old as under the New. The best privileges the ancient Jews had were their gospel privileges, the sacrifices and ceremonies of the Old Testament were the gospel of that dispensation, and whatever was excellent in it was the respect it had to Christ. Now if this was their highest privilege, we are inferior to them; for we have the gospel as well as they, and in greater purity and perspicuity than they had.

3. He assigns the reason why so few of the ancient Jews profited by that dispensation of the gospel which they enjoyed, and that was their want of faith; *the word preached did not profit them, because it was not mixed with faith in them that heard him*, *ver. 2.* Observe, 1. The word is preached to us, that we may profit by it; that we may gain spiritual riches by it; it is a price put into our hands to get wisdom, the rich endowment of the soul. 2. There have been in all ages a great many unprofitable hearers: Many that seem to deal much in sermons, in hearing the word of God, but gain nothing to their souls thereby; and they that are not gainers by hearing, are great losers. 3. That which is at the bottom of all our unprofitableness under the word, is our unbelief; we do not mix faith with what we hear; it is faith in the hearer that is the life of the word. Though the preacher believe the gospel, and endeavours to mix faith with his preaching, and to speak as one that has believed and so spoken, yet if the hearers have not faith in their souls to mix with the word, they will be never the better for it. This faith must mingle with every word, and be in act and exercise, while we are hearing, and when we have heard the word, assenting to the truth of it, approving of it, accepting the mercy offered, applying the word to our selves, with suitable affections, then we shall find great profit and gain by the word preached.

4. On these considerations the apostle grounds his repeated and earnest caution and counsel, that they who enjoy the gospel should maintain a holy fear and jealousy over themselves, lest latent unbelief should rob them of the benefit of the word, and of that spiritual rest that is discovered and tendered in the gospel, *ver. 1. Let us fear lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.* Observe, 1. Grace and glory are attainable by all under the gospel: There is an offer, and a promise to those that shall accept the offer. 2. Those that may attain them, may also fall short. They that might have attained salvation by faith, may fall short by unbelief. 3. That it is a dreadful thing so much as to seem to fall short of the gospel salvation, to seem so to themselves, to lose their comfortable hope; and to seem so to others, so losing the honour of their holy profession. But if it be so dreadful to seem to fall short of this rest, it is much more dreadful really to fall short. Such a disappointment must be fatal. 4. One good mean to prevent either our real falling short, or seeming to fall short, is to maintain a holy and religious fear, lest we should fall short. This will make us vigilant and diligent, sincere and serious; this fear will put us upon examining our faith, and exercising it; whereas presumption is the high road to ruin.

5. The apostle confirms the happiness of all those that truly believe the gospel; and that he does, 1. By asserting so positively the truth of it, from the experience of himself and others, *ver. 3. We which have believed do enter into rest.* We do enter into a blessed union with Christ, and into a communion with God through Christ, and in this state we do actually enjoy many sweet communications of pardon of sin, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, increase of grace, and earnestness of glory, resting from the servitude of sin, and reposing our selves in God till we are prepared to rest with him in heaven. 2. He illustrates and confirms it, that they that believe are thus happy, and do enter into rest. First, From God's finishing his work of creation, and so entering into his rest, *ver. 3, 4.* appointing our first parents to rest the seventh day, to rest in God. Now as God finished his work, and then rested from it, and acquiesced in it, so he will cause those that believe to finish their work, and then to enjoy their rest. Secondly, From God's continuing the observation of the sabbath, after the fall and revelation of a Redeemer. They were to keep the seventh day a holy sabbath to the Lord, therein praising him who had raised them up out of nothing by creating power, and praying to him, that he create them anew by his Spirit of grace, and direct their faith to the promised Redeemer and restorer of all things, by which faith they find rest in their souls. 3. From God's proposing Canaan as a typical rest for the Jews that believed; and as those that did believe, *viz. Caleb and Joshua*, did actually enter into Canaan; so those that now believe shall enter into rest. 4. From the certainty of another rest besides that seventh day of rest instituted and observed both before and after the fall, and besides that typical Canaan rest which most of the Jews fell short of by unbelief; for the psalmist hath spoken of another day, and another rest. From whence it is evident, that there is a more spiritual and excellent sabbath remaining for the people of God, than that into which Joshua led the Jews, *ver. 6, 7, 8.* and this rest remaining is, First, A rest of grace, and comfort, and holiness in the gospel state: This is the rest wherewith the Lord Jesus, our Joshua, causes weary souls and awakened consciences to rest, and this is the refreshing. Secondly, A rest in glory: the everlasting sabbatism of heaven, which is the repose and perfection of nature and grace too, where the people of God shall enjoy the end of their faith, and the object of all their desires. 5. This is farther proved from the glorious forerunners, who have actually taken possession of this rest, God and Christ. It is certain God after the creating of the world in six days, entered into his rest; and it is certain, that Christ, when he had finished the work of our redemption, entered into his rest; and these were not only examples but earnest, that believers shall enter into their rest, *ver. 10. He that hath entered into rest, hath also ceased from his own works, as God did from his.* Every true believer hath ceased from his own works of sin, from relying on his own works of righteousness, and from the burthenome works of the law; as God and Christ have ceased from their works of creation and redemption.

6. The apostle confirms the misery of those that do not believe; they shall never enter into this spiritual rest, either of grace here, or glory hereafter. This is as certain as the word and oath of God can make it; as sure as God is entered into his rest, so sure it is that obstinate unbelievers shall be excluded; as sure as the unbelieving Jews fell in the wilderness, and never reached the promised land, so sure it is that unbelievers shall fall into destruction, and never reach heaven; as sure as Joshua, the great captain of the Jews, could not give them possession of Canaan because of their unbelief, notwithstanding his eminent valour and conduct; so sure it is, that even Jesus himself, the captain of our salvation, notwithstanding all that fulness of grace and strength that dwells in him, will not, cannot, give to final unbelievers, either spiritual or eternal rest: It only remains for the people of God, others by their sin abandon themselves to eternal restlessness.

11. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief. 12. For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. 13. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do. 14. Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. 15. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. 16. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

In this latter part of the chapter the apostle concludes, first with a serious repeated exhortation, and then with proper and powerful motives.

1. Here we have a serious exhortation, *ver. 11. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest.* Observe, 1. The end proposed, rest spiritual and eternal; the rest of grace here, and glory hereafter; in Christ on earth, with Christ in heaven. 2. The way to this end prescribed; and that is labour, diligent labour; this is the only way to rest; they that will not work now, shall not rest hereafter. After due and diligent labour, sweet and satisfying rest shall follow, and labour now will make that rest more pleasant, when it comes; *the sleep of the labouring man is sweet*, Eccl. v. 12. Let us therefore labour, let us all agree, and be unanimous in this, and let us quicken one another, and call upon one another to this diligence. It is the truest act of friendship, when we see our fellow-Christians loiter, to call upon them to mind their business, and labour at it in earnest. Come, Sirs, let us all go to work; why do we sit still? why do we loiter? Come, let us labour, now is our working time, our rest remains. Thus should Christians call upon themselves, and one another, to be diligent in duty, and so much the more; as we see the day approaching.

2. Here we have proper and powerful motives to make the advice effectual, which are drawn, (1.) From the dreadful example of those that have already perished by unbelief, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief. To have seen so many fall before us, will be a great aggravation of our sin, if we will not take warning by them: Their ruin calls loudly upon us; their lost and restless souls cry to us, from their torments, that we do not by sinning as they did, make our selves miserable as they are. (2.) From the great help and advantage we may have from the word of God to strengthen our faith, and excite our diligence, that we may obtain this rest, *ver. 12. the word of God is quick and powerful, &c.* By the word of God we may understand either the *essential*, or the *written* word. The *essential* word, that in the beginning was with God, and was God, John i. 1. the Lord Jesus Christ, and indeed, what is said in this verse concerning him; but most understand it of the written word, the holy scriptures, which are the word of God. Now of this word it is said, 1. That it is *quick*, it is very lively and active, in all its efforts, in seizing the conscience of the sinner, in cutting him to the heart, and in comforting him and binding up the wounds of the soul. They know not the word of God that call it a dead letter, as the Papists and the Quakers do; it is quick, compared to the light, and nothing quicker than the light; it is not only *quick*, but *quickening*; it is a vital light; it is a living word, *Zōv*. Saints die, and sinners die, but the word of God lives. *All flesh is grass, and all the glory thereof as the flower of grass: The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away, but the word of the Lord endureth for ever*, 1 Pet. i. 24, 25. *Your fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever? But my words, which I commanded the prophets, did they not take hold of your fathers?* Zech. i. 5, 6. 2. It is *powerful*. When God sets it home by his Spirit, it convinces powerfully, converts powerfully, and comforts powerfully. It is so powerful as to pull down strong holds, 1 Cor. x. 4, 5. To raise the dead, to make the deaf to hear, and the blind to see, and the dumb to speak, and the lame to walk. It is powerful to batter down Satan's kingdom, and to set up the kingdom of Christ upon the ruins thereof. 3. It is sharper than any two-edged sword; it cuts both ways; it is the sword of the Spirit, Eph. vi. 17. It is the two-edged sword that cometh out of the mouth of Christ, Rev. i. 16. It is sharper than any two-edged sword, for it will enter where no other sword can, and make a more critical dissection; it pierceth to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, the soul, and its habitual prevailing temper, make a soul that has been a long time of a proud spirit, to be humble; of a perverse spirit, to be meek and obedient. Those sinful habits, that are become as it were natural to the soul, and radicated deeply in it, and become in a sort, one with it, are separated and cut off by this sword. It cuts off ignorance from the understanding, rebellion from the will, enmity from the mind, which when carnal is enmity itself against God. This sword divides between the joints and the marrow, the most secret, close and intimate parts of the body; this sword can cut off the lusts of the flesh, as well as the lusts of the mind, and make men willing to undergo the sharpest operation for the mortifying of sin. 4. It is a *discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart*, even the most secret and remote thoughts and designs: It will discover to men the variety of their thoughts and purposes, the vileness of them, the bad principles they are acted by, the sinister and sinful ends they act to. The word will turn the inside of a sinner out, and let him see all that is in his heart. Now such a word as this must needs be a great help to our faith and obedience. (3.) From the perfections of the Lord Jesus Christ, both of his person and office. 1. Person particularly, his omniscience, *ver. 13. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight, but, &c.* This is agreeable to what Christ speaks of himself, Rev. ii. 22. *All the churches shall know that I am he that searcheth the reins and hearts.* None of the creatures can be concealed from Christ; none of the creatures of God, for Christ is the creator of them all; none of the

motions and workings of our heads and hearts, which may be called creatures of our own, but what are open and manifest to him with whom we have to do as the object of our worship, and the high priest of our profession. He, by his omniscience, cuts up the sacrifice we bring to him, that it may be presented to the Father. Now as the high priest inspected the sacrificed beasts, cut them up to the back-bone, to see whether they were sound at heart; so all things are thus dissected, and lie open to the piercing eye of our great high priest. And he that now tries our sacrifices, will at length, as judge, try our state. We shall have to do with him as one that will determine our everlasting state. Some read the words, to whom with us there is an account or reckoning. Christ hath an exact account of us all; he has accounted for all that believe on him; and he will account with all; our accounts are before him. This omniscience of Christ, and the account we owe of ourselves to him, should engage us to persevere in faith and obedience, till he has perfected all our affairs. 2. We have an account of the excellency and perfection of Christ, as to his office, and this particular office of our high priest. The apostle first instructs Christians in the knowledge of their high priest; what kind of priest he is; and then puts them in mind of the duty they owe on this account.

1. What a kind of high priest Christ is, *ver. 14. Seeing we have such an high priest*: That is, 1. A great high priest, much greater than Aaron, or any of the priests of his order. The high priests under the law were accounted great and venerable persons; but they were but faint types and shadows of Christ. The greatness of our high priest is set forth, 1. By his being passed into the heavens. The high priest under the law, once a year went out of the people's sight within the veil, into the holiest of all, where were the sacred signals of the presence of God; but Christ once for all is passed into the heavens, to take the government of all upon him, to send the Spirit to prepare a place for his people, and to make intercession for them. Christ executed one part of his priesthood on earth, in dying for us; the other he executes in heaven, by pleading the cause, and presenting the offerings of his people. 2. The greatness of Christ is set forth by his name, Jesus; a physician and a saviour, and one of a divine nature, the Son of God by eternal generation; and therefore, having divine perfection, able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him. 2. He is not only a great, but a gracious high priest, merciful, compassionate, and sympathizing with his people, *ver. 15.* We have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. Though he is so great, and so far above us, yet he is very kind and tenderly concerned for us; he is touched with the feeling of our infirmities in such a manner, as none else can; for he was himself tried with all the affliction and troubles that are incident to our nature in its fallen state; and this not only that he might be able to satisfy for us, but to sympathize with us. But then, 3. He is a sinless high priest: He was in all things tempted as we are, yet without sin. He was tempted by Satan, but he came off without sin. We seldom meet with temptations, but they give us some shock. We are apt to give back, though we do not yield; but our great high priest came off clear in his encounter with the devil; he could neither find any sin in him, nor fix any stain upon him. He was tried severely by the Father. It pleased the Lord to bruise him; and yet he sinned not, either in thought, word, or deed. He had done no violence, neither was there any deceit in his mouth. He was holy, harmless, and undefiled; and such an high priest became us. Having thus told us what a one our high priest is, the apostle proceeds to shew us,

2. How we should demean ourselves towards him. 1. Let us hold fast our profession of faith in him, *ver. 14.* Let us never deny him, never be ashamed of him before men. Let us hold fast the enlightening doctrines of Christianity in our heads, and the enlivening principles of it in our hearts, and the open profession of it in our lips, and our practical and universal subjection to it in our lives. Observe here, 1. We ought to be possessed of the doctrines, principles, and practice of the Christian life. 2. When we are so, we may be in danger of losing our hold, from the corruption of our hearts, the temptations of Satan, and the allurements of this evil world. 3. That the excellency of the high priest of our profession, would make our apostasy from him most heinous and inexcusable; it would be the greatest folly, and the basest ingratitude. 4. Christians must not only set out well, but they must hold out; they that endure to the end shall be saved, and none but they.

3. We should encourage ourselves by the excellency of our high priest to come boldly to the throne of grace, *ver. 16.* Where observe, 1. There is a throne of grace set up; a way of worship instituted, in which God may with honour meet poor sinners, and treat with them, and they may with hope draw nigh to him, repenting and believing. God might have set up a tribunal of strict and inexorable justice, dispensing death, the wages of sin, to all that are convened before it; but he has chosen to set up a throne of grace. A throne speaks authority, and bespeaks awe and reverence: A throne of grace speaks great encouragement even to the chief of sinners: There grace reigns, and acts with sovereign freedom, power and bounty. 2. It is

our duty and interest to be often found before this throne of grace, waiting on the Lord in all the duties of his worship, secret, private, and publick. It is good for us to be there. 3. Our business and errand at the throne of grace, should be, that we obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. Mercy and grace are the things we want; mercy to pardon all our sins, and grace to purify our souls. 4. That besides the daily dependence we have upon God for present supplies, there are some seasons in which we shall most sensibly need the mercy and grace of God; and we should lay up prayers against such seasons, times of temptation, either by adversity or prosperity, and especially a dying time; we should every day put up a petition for mercy in our last day. The Lord grant unto us, that we may find mercy of the Lord at that day, 2 Tim. i. 18. 5. That in all our approaches to this throne of grace for mercy, we should come with an humble freedom and boldness, with a liberty of spirit, and a liberty of speech; we should ask in faith, nothing doubting; we should come with a Spirit of adoption, as children to a reconciled God and Father. We are indeed to come with reverence and godly fear, but not with terror and amazement; not as if we were dragged before the tribunal of justice, but kindly invited to the mercy-seat, where grace reigns, and loves to exert and exalt itself towards us. 6. That the office of Christ, as being our high priest, and such an high priest should be the ground of our confidence in all our approaches to the throne of grace. Had we not a mediator, we could have no boldness in coming to God; for we are guilty and polluted creatures; all we do is polluted; we cannot go into the presence of God alone; we must either go in the hand of a mediator, or our hearts and our hopes will fail us. We have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus; he is our advocate, and while he pleads for his people, he pleads with the price in his hand, by which he has purchased all that our souls want or can desire.

C H A P. V.

In this chapter the apostle continues his discourse upon the priesthood of Christ, a sweet subject, which he would not too soon dismiss. And here, (1.) He explains the nature of the priestly office in general, ver. 1, 2, 3. (2.) The proper and regular call there must be to this office, ver. 4, 5, 6. (3.) The requisite qualifications for the work, ver. 7, 8, 9. (4.) The peculiar order of the priesthood of Christ; it was not after the order of Aaron, but of Melchisedec, ver. 6, 7, 10. (5.) He reproves the Hebrews, that they had not made those improvements in knowledge, as might have made them capable of looking into the more abstruse and mysterious parts of scripture, ver. 11, 12, 13, 14.

1. **F**OR every high priest taken from among men, is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins: 2. Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity: 3. And by reason hereof he ought as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins. 4. And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron: 5. So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee. 6. As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. 7. Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard, in that he feared; 8. Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience, by the things which he suffered: 9. And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;

1. We have here an account of the nature of the priestly office in general, though with an accommodation to the Lord Jesus Christ, where we are told, 1. *Of what kind of beings*, the high priest must be: He must be taken from among men; he must be a man, one of our selves, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, and spirit of our spirits, a partaker of our nature, and a standard-bearer among ten thousand. This implies, 1. That man had sinned. 2. That God would not admit sinful man to come to him immediately and alone without an high priest, who must be taken from among men. 3. That God was pleased to take one from among men by whom they might approach God in hope, and he might receive them with honour. 4. That

every one shall now be welcome to God that comes to him by this high priest.

2. *For whom* every high priest is ordained, *for men in things, pertaining to God*, i. e. for the glory of God, and the good of men, that he might come between God and man. So Christ did; and therefore let us never attempt to go to God, but through Christ; nor expect any favour from God but through Christ.

3. *For what purpose* was every high priest ordained; *that he might offer both gifts and sacrifices for sin*. 1. *That he might offer gifts*, or free-will offerings, brought to the high priest, so offered for the glory of God, and as an acknowledgment that our all is of him, and from him, we have nothing but what he is pleased to give us, and of his own we offer to him an oblation of acknowledgment. This intimates, 1. That all we bring to God, must be free, and not forced; it must be a gift, it must be given, and not taken away again. 2. That all we bring to God must go through the high priest's hands, as the great agent between God and man. 2. *That he might offer sacrifices for sin*: That is, the offerings that were appointed to make atonement, that sin might be pardoned, and sinners accepted. This Christ is constituted a high priest for both these ends. Our good deeds must be presented by Christ to render ourselves and them acceptable; and our ill deeds must be expiated by the sacrifice of himself, that they may not condemn and destroy us. And now as we value acceptance with God, and pardon, we must apply ourselves by faith to this our great high priest.

4. How this high priest must be qualified, *ver. 2*. 1. He must be *one that can have compassion* on two sorts of persons. 1. *On the ignorant*, or those that are guilty of sins of ignorance, he must be one that can find in his heart to pity them, and intercede with God for them; one that is willing to instruct them that are dull of understanding. 2. On those that are out of the way, out of the way of truth, duty, and happiness; and he must be one that has tenderness enough to lead them back from the by-paths of error, sin, and misery, into the right way: And this will require great patience and compassion, even the compassion of a God.

2. He must also be *compassed with infirmity*; and so be able from himself, feelingly, to consider our frame, and to sympathize with us. Thus Christ was qualified; he took upon him our sinless infirmities; and this gives us great encouragement to apply ourselves to him under every affliction, for in all the afflictions of his people, he is afflicted.

5. *How the high priest was to be called of God*; and he must have both an internal, and an external call to his office; *for no man taketh the honour to himself*, ver. 4. that is, no man ought to do it, no man can do it legally; if any does it, he must be reckoned an usurper, and treated accordingly. Here observe, 1. The office of the priesthood was a very great honour, to be employed to stand between God and man, one while representing God, and his will to men, at another time representing man, and his case to God; and dealing between them about matters of the highest importance, entrusted on both sides with the honour of God, and the happiness of man, must render the office very honourable. 2. That the priesthood is an office and honour that no man ought to take to himself; if he does, he can expect no success in it, nor any reward for it, only from himself. He is an intruder who is not called of God, as was Aaron. Observe, 1. God is the fountain of all honour, especial, true, spiritual honour: He is the fountain of true authority, whether he calls any to the priesthood in an extraordinary way, as he did Aaron, or in an ordinary way, as he called his successors. 2. That those only can expect assistance from God, and acceptance with him, and his presence and blessing on them and their administrations, that are called of God; others may expect a blast instead of a blessing.

6. How this is brought home and applied to Christ, *ver. 5*. *So Christ glorified not himself*. Observe here, though Christ reckoned it his glory to be made an high priest, yet he would not assume that glory to himself. He could truly say, *I seek not mine own glory*, John viii. 50. Consider him as God; he was not capable of any additional glory, but as man and mediator he did not run without being sent; and if he did not, surely others should be afraid to do it.

7. The apostle prefers Christ before Aaron, both in the manner of his call, and in the holiness of his person. 1. In the manner of his call, in which God said unto him, *Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee*, quoted from Psal. ii. 7. referring both to his eternal generation as God, his wonderful conception as man, and his perfect qualification as mediator. Thus God solemnly declares his dear affection to Christ, his authoritative appointment of him to the office of a mediator, his instalment and approbation of him in that office, his acceptance of him, and of all he had done, or should do in the discharge of it. Now God never said thus to Aaron. Another expression that God used in the call of Christ, we have in Psal. cx. 4. *Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec*, ver. 6. God the Father appointed him a priest of an higher order than that of Aaron; the priesthood of Aaron was to be but temporay; the priesthood of Christ was to be perpetual; the priesthood of Aaron was to be successive, descending from the fathers to the children; the priesthood of Christ, after the order of Melchisedec, was to be personal, and the high priest

priest immortal as to his office, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life, as it is more largely described in the seventh chapter, and will be opened there. 2. Christ is here preferred to Aaron in the holiness of his person. Other priests were to offer up sacrifices, as for the sins of others, so for themselves, ver. 3. But Christ need not to offer for sins for himself, for he had done no violence, neither was there any deceit in his mouth, Isa. liii. 9. And such a high priest became us.

8. We have an account of *Christ's discharge* of this his office, and of the consequences of that discharge, ver. 7, 8, 9.

1. The discharge of his office of the priesthood, ver. 7. *Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, &c.* Where observe, 1. That he took to him flesh, and for some days he tabernacled therein; i. e. He became a mortal man, and reckoned his life by days; herein setting us an example how we should reckon ours. Would we reckon our lives by days, it would be a means to quicken us to do the work of every day in its day. 2. That Christ, in the days of his flesh, subjected himself to death, he was an hungred, tempted, bleeding, dying Jesus! His body is now in heaven, but it is a spiritual glorious body. 3. God the Father was able to save him from death; he could have prevented his dying, but he would not; for then the great design of his wisdom and grace must have been defeated. What would have become of us, if God had saved Christ from dying? The Jews reproachfully said, *Let him deliver him now, if he will have him*, Matt. xxvii. 43. But it was in kindness to us, that the Father would not suffer that bitter cup to pass away from him; for then we must have drunk the dregs of it, and been miserable for ever. 4. Christ, in the days of his flesh, offered up prayers and supplications to his Father, as an earnest of his intercession in heaven. A great many instances we have of Christ's praying. This refers to his prayer in his agony, Matt. xxvi. 39. and chap. xxvii. 46. and to that before his agony, John xvii. which he put up for his disciples, and all that should believe on his name. 5. The prayers and supplications that Christ offered up, were joined with strong cries and tears; herein setting us an example not only to pray, but to be fervent and importunate in prayer. How many dry prayers, how few wet ones, do we offer up to God! 6. That Christ was heard in that he feared: How? why he was answered by present supports in, and under his agonies, and in being carried well through death, and delivered from it by a glorious resurrection; *he was heard in that he feared*. He had an awful sense of the wrath of God, of the weight of sin. His human nature was ready to sink under the heavy load; and would have sunk, had he been quite forsaken in point of help and comfort from God; but he was heard in this, he was supported under the agonies of death: He was carried through death, and there is no real deliverance from death, but to be carried well through it. We may have many recoveries from sickness, but are never saved from death, till we are carried well through it: And they that are thus saved from death, shall be fully delivered at last by a glorious resurrection, of which the resurrection of Christ was the earnest and first-fruits.

2. The consequences of this discharge of his office, ver. 8, 9, &c. (1.) By these his sufferings *he learned obedience, though he was a son*, ver. 8. Here observe, 1. The privilege of Christ, *he was a son*; the only-begotten of the Father. One would have thought this might have exempted him from suffering, but it did not: Let none then, who are the children of God by adoption, expect an absolute freedom from suffering. *What son is he whom the Father chasteneth not?* 2. Christ made improvement by his sufferings; he learned obedience by his passive obedience; he learned active obedience; that is, he practised that great lesson, and made it appear, that he was well and perfectly learned in it, though he never was disobedient, yet he never performed such an act of obedience, as when he became obedient to death, even to the death of the cross. Here he hath left us an example, that we should learn by all our affliction an humble obedience to the will of God: We need affliction to teach us submission. (2.) By these his sufferings he was made perfect, and became the author of eternal salvation to all that obey him, ver. 9. 1. Christ by his sufferings was consecrated to his office, consecrated by his own blood. 2. By his suffering he consummated that part of his office which was to be performed on earth, making reconciliation for iniquity; and in this sense he is said to be made perfect, a perfect propitiation. 3. Hereby he is become the author of eternal salvation to men; he has by his sufferings purchased a full deliverance from sin and misery, and a full fruition of holiness and happiness for his people. Of this salvation he hath given notice in the gospel; he has made a tender of it in the new covenant, and has sent the Spirit to enable men to accept this salvation. 4. This salvation is actually bestowed on none but those that obey Christ. It is not sufficient that we have some doctrinal knowledge of Christ, or that we make a profession of faith in him, but we must hearken to his word, and obey him. He is exalted to be a prince to rule us, as well as a saviour to deliver us; and he will be a Saviour to none, but to those to whom he is a prince, and who are willing that he should reign over them; the rest he will account his enemies, and treat them accordingly. But to those that obey him, devoting themselves to him, denying them-

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selves, and taking up their cross and following him, he will be the author, *αὐτὸς*, the grand cause of their salvation, and they shall own him as such for ever.

10. Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec. 11. Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered; seeing ye are dull of hearing. 12. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. 13. For every one that useth milk, is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. 14. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, *even* those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

Here the apostle returns to what he had in ver. 6. cited out of *Psal. cx.* concerning the peculiar order of the priesthood of Christ, i. e. the order of Melchisedec. And here,

1. He declares he had many things, which he could not say to them concerning this mysterious person called Melchisedec, whose priesthood was eternal; and therefore the salvation procured thereby should be eternal also. We have a more particular account of this Melchisedec in chap. vii. Some think the things which the apostle means, that were hard to be uttered, were not so much concerning Melchisedec himself, as concerning Christ, of whom Melchisedec was the type. And doubtless this apostle had many things to say concerning Christ, that were very mysterious, hard to be uttered; there are great mysteries in the person and offices of the Redeemer; Christian is the great mystery of godliness.

2. He assigns the reason why he did not say all those things concerning Christ, our Melchisedec, that he had to say, and what it was that made it so difficult for him to utter them, and that was the dulness of the Hebrews to whom he wrote, *ye are dull of hearing*. There is a difficulty in the things themselves, and there may be a weakness in the ministers of the gospel to speak clearly about these things; but generally the fault is in the hearers; dull hearers make the preaching of the gospel a difficult thing, and even those that have some faith, may be dull hearers; dull of understanding, and slow to believe; the understanding is weak, and does not apprehend these spiritual things; the memory is weak, and does not retain them.

3. He insists upon the faultiness of this infirmity of theirs; it was not a mere natural infirmity, but it was a sinful infirmity, and more in them than others, by reason of the singular advantages they had enjoyed for improving in the knowledge of Christ, ver. 12. *For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again, which be the first principles of the oracles of God*. Where observe, 1. What proficiency might have been reasonably expected from these Hebrews, viz. that they might have been so well instructed in the doctrine of the gospel, as to have been teachers of others. Hence learn, 1. That God takes notice of the time and helps we have for gaining scripture knowledge. 2. That from those to whom much is given, much is expected. 3. That those who have a good understanding in the gospel should be teachers of others, if not in a publick, yet in a private station. 4. That none should take upon them to be teachers of others, but who have made a good improvement in spiritual knowledge themselves. 2. Observe the sad disappointment of those just expectations, *ye have need that one should teach you again, &c.* Here note, 1. That in the oracles of God there are some first principles, plain to be understood, and necessary to be learned. 2. That there are also deep and sublime mysteries, which those should search into that have learned the first principles, that so they may stand complete in the whole will of God. 3. That some persons, instead of going forward in Christian knowledge, forget the very first principles that they had learned long ago; and indeed they that are not improving under the means of grace, will be losing. 4. It is a sin and shame for persons that are men for their age and standing in the church, to be children and babes in understanding.

4. The apostle shews how the various doctrines of the gospel must be dispensed to different persons. There are in the church babes and persons of full age, ver. 12, 13, 14. and there is in the gospel milk and strong meat. Observe, 1. Those that are babes, unskilful of the word of righteousness, must be fed with milk; they must be entertained with the plainest truths; these delivered in the plainest manner; *there must be line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little, and there a little*, Isa. xxviii. 10. Christ despiseth not his babes; he hath provided suitable food for them. It is good to be babes in Christ, but not always to continue in that childish state; we should endeavour to pass the infant state; we should always remain in malice children, but in understanding we should grow up to a manly maturity. 2. There is strong meat for those that are of full age, ver. 14. The deeper mysteries of religion

religion belong to those that are of a higher class in the school of Christ, who have learned the first principles, and well improved them; so that by reason of use they have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil, duty and sin, truth and error. Observe, 1. There have been always in the Christian state children, young men and fathers, 2. Every true Christian having received a principle of spiritual life from God, stands in need of nourishment to preserve that life. 3. That the word of God is food and nourishment to the life of grace, as new born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby. 4. That it is the wisdom of ministers rightly to divide the word of truth, and to give to every one his portion; milk to babes, and strong meat to those of full age. 5. That there are spiritual senses, as well as those that are natural. There is a spiritual eye, a spiritual appetite, a spiritual taste; the soul has its sensations as well as the body; these are much depraved and lost by sin, but they are recovered by grace. 6. It is by use and exercise that these senses are improved, made more quick and strong to taste the sweetness of what is good and true, and the bitterness of what is false and evil. Not only reason and faith, but spiritual sense will teach men to distinguish between what is pleasing and what is provoking to God, between what is helpful and what is hurtful to our own souls.

C H A P. VI.

In this chapter the apostle proceeds to persuade the Hebrews to make a better proficiency in religion than they had done, as the best way to prevent apostasy, the dreadful nature and consequences of which sin he sets forth in a serious manner, ver. 1, 2, 3—9. And then expresses his good hopes concerning them, that they would persevere in faith and holiness, to which he exhorts them, and sets before them the great encouragement they have from God, both with respect to their duty and happiness from ver. 9. to the end.

1. **T**HEREFORE leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith towards God, 2. Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. 3. And this will we do, if God permit. 4. For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the holy Ghost, 5. And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come; 6. If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance: seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. 7. For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them, by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: 8. But that which beareth thorns and briers, is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.

1. We have here the apostle's advice to the Hebrews, that they would grow up from a state of childhood, to the fulness of the stature of the new man in Christ, and he declares his readiness to assist them all he could in their spiritual progress; and for their greater encouragement, he puts himself with them, *let us go on*. Here observe, 1. In order to their growth, Christians must leave the principles of the doctrine of Christ. How must they leave them? They must not lose them, they must not despise them, they must not forget them; they must lay them up in their hearts, and lay them as the foundation of all their profession and expectation, but they must not rest and stay in them; they must not be always laying the foundation, but they must go on and build upon it; there must be a superstructure; for the foundation is laid on purpose to support the building. Here it may be enquired, why did the apostle resolve to set strong meat before the Hebrews, when he knew they were but babes. *Ans.* 1. Though some of them were but weak, yet others of them had gained more strength; and they must be provided for suitably. And as those that are grown Christians must be willing to hear the plainest truths preached for the sake of the weak, so the weak must be willing to hear the more difficult and mysterious truths preached for the sake of those that are strong. 2. He hoped they would be growing in their spiritual strength and stature, and so be able to digest stronger meat. 2. The apostle mentions several foundation principles, which must be well laid at first, and then built upon; neither his time nor theirs must be

spent in laying these foundations over and over again. These foundations are six.

1. Repentance from dead works, *i. e.* Conversion and regeneration, repentance from a spiritually dead state and course. *q. d.* Have a care of destroying the life of grace in your souls; your minds were changed by conversion, and so were your lives. Take care that you return not to sin again, for then you must have the foundation to lay again; there must be a second conversion; a repenting not only of but from dead works. Observe here, 1. That the sins of persons unconverted are dead works; they proceed from persons spiritually dead, and they tend to death eternal. 2. That repentance *for* dead works, if it be right, is repentance *from* dead works; an universal change of heart and life. 3. That repentance for and from dead works is a foundation principle, which must not be laid again, though we must renew our repentance daily.

2. Faith towards God, a firm belief of the existence of God, of his nature, attributes, and perfection, the trinity of persons in the unity of essence, the whole mind and will of God as revealed in his word, particularly what relates to the Lord Jesus Christ. We must by faith acquaint our selves with these things, we must assent to them, we must approve of them, and apply all to ourselves with suitable affections and actions. Observe, That repentance from dead works, and faith towards God, are connected, and always go together; they are inseparable twins; the one cannot live without the other. 2. Both of these are foundation principles, which should be once well laid, but never pulled up, so as to need to be laid over again; we must not relapse into infidelity.

3. The doctrine of baptisms, *i. e.* of being baptized by a minister of Christ with water, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, as the initiating sign or seal of the covenant of grace; strongly engaging the person so baptized to get acquainted with the new covenant; to adhere to it, and prepare to renew it at the table of the Lord, and sincerely to regulate himself according to it; and relying upon the truth and faithfulness of God for the blessings contained in it. And the doctrine of an inward baptism, that of the Spirit sprinkling the blood of Christ upon the soul, for justification, and the graces of the Spirit for sanctification. This ordinance of baptism is a foundation to be rightly laid, and daily remembered, but not repeated.

4. Laying on of hands, either on persons passing solemnly from their initiated state by baptism, to the confirmed state, by returning the answer of a good conscience towards God, and sitting down at the Lord's table. This passing from incomplete to complete church membership, was performed by laying on of hands, which the extraordinary conveyance of the gift of the Holy Ghost continued. This once done, all are obliged to abide by, and not to need another solemn admission, as at first, but to go on and grow up in Christ. Or by this may be meant, ordination of persons to the ministerial office, who are duly qualified for it, and inclined to it; and this by fasting and prayer, with laying on of the hands of the presbytery. And this is to be done but once.

5. The resurrection of the dead, *i. e.* of dead bodies; and their re-union with their souls, to be eternal companions together in weal or woe, according as their state was towards God when they died, and the course of life they led in this world.

6. Eternal judgment, determining the soul of every one, when it leaves the body at death, and both soul and body at the last day, to their eternal state; every one to his proper society and employment to which they were entitled and fitted here on earth; the wicked to everlasting punishment, the righteous to life eternal.

These are the great foundation principles which ministers should clearly and convincingly unfold and closely apply: In these the people should be well instructed and established, and from these they must never depart; without these, other parts of religion have no foundation to support them.

2. The apostle declares his readiness and resolution to assist the Hebrews in building themselves up on these foundations till they arrive at perfection, *ver. 3. And this we will do, if God permit*. And hereby he teaches them, 1. That right resolution is very necessary in order to progress and proficiency in religion. 2. That resolution is right which is not only made in the sincerity of our hearts, but in an humble dependence upon God, both for strength, for assistance and righteousness, for acceptance, and for time and opportunity. 3. That ministers should not only teach people what to do, but go before them and along with them in the way of duty.

3. He shews that this spiritual growth is the surest way to prevent that dreadful sin of apostasy here from the faith. And here, 1. He shews how far persons may go in religion, and after all fall away and perish for ever, *ver. 4, 5.* 1. They may be enlightened. Some of the ancients understand this of their being baptized, but it is rather to be understood of notional knowledge and common illumination, of which persons may have a great deal, and yet come short of heaven. *Balaam was the man whose eyes were opened*, Numb. xxiv. 3. And yet with his eyes opened he went down to utter darkness. 2. They may taste of the heavenly gift, feel something of the efficacy of the Holy Spirit in his operations